

Easter V © [May 18, 2025] ~ Sunday Homily

Today, we are invited to reflect on the theme of growth, transformation, and love. The readings highlight how we, as Christians, are called to grow in our relationship with God and one another, as well as how we are transformed by God's love. As we continue in the Easter season, we remember that we are always being renewed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we hear about the early Church's mission to spread the good news. Paul and Barnabas, after facing opposition in some cities, are sent to strengthen the communities of believers. They focus on helping these communities grow in faith, teaching them to remain faithful to the gospel despite the challenges. Through their perseverance and the strength of the Holy Spirit, they continue to build up the Church.

The second reading from the Book of Revelation gives us a vision of the New Jerusalem, a city of peace where God dwells with His people. In this vision, we see the final fulfillment of God's promise to His people. It is a vision of hope and renewal, where everything is made new. The vision calls us to remember that, no matter what we face in this life, God's ultimate plan for us is one of peace, renewal, and union with Him.

In the Gospel reading from John, Jesus speaks to His disciples about the new commandment of love. He tells them, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. You are the branches." This image of the vine and branches teaches us that we are called to remain in Jesus, just as branches remain attached to the vine. Only by remaining connected to Jesus can we bear fruit and grow in love. Jesus then gives the commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you." This is the heart of the Christian life: a life rooted in the love of Christ and shared with others.

So, what can we take from today's readings for our own lives?

First, we have to Remain Rooted in Jesus; the image of the vine and branches is a powerful reminder that our relationship with Jesus is the source of all our strength. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it is connected to the vine, we cannot live a fruitful Christian life unless we remain deeply connected to Jesus. Through prayer, the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and living out His teachings, we are nourished by Jesus and can grow in His love.

Second, we should have a Growth in Faith and Community; in the first reading, Paul and Barnabas travel to strengthen the communities in their faith. We, too, are called to grow in our faith and help one another to grow. As a Church, we are a community of believers who support and encourage each other. This growth is not just individual; it is communal. We grow together as the Body of Christ. Let us take this opportunity to strengthen our bonds with each other in love and in faith.

Third, we should obey the Commandment of Love; the central message of the Gospel is that love is the essence of Christian life. Jesus calls us to love one another as He has loved us. This love is not just a feeling, but an action - a love that sacrifices for others, that serves, that forgives, and that seeks the good of others. It is through this love that we bear fruit and make Christ known to the world. The love we share with others is a witness to the world of God's love for all people.

(To our First Communion students, today is a momentous day in your journey with Jesus. As you prepare to receive Jesus in the Eucharist for the first time, remember that you are being invited to become a part of the vine that is Christ. When you receive the Eucharist, you are receiving the love of Jesus into your hearts, and it is through that love that you are called to bear fruit. The love of Jesus that you receive in the Eucharist is a love that is meant to grow in you and through you. As you continue on your journey of faith, remember that you are called to love others as Jesus loves you. Through your actions - through kindness, service, forgiveness, and care - you will show the world the love of Jesus.)

In conclusion, today's readings remind us that as Christians, we are called to remain rooted in Jesus, to grow in faith, and to love one another as He has loved us. By remaining connected to Christ and living out His commandment of love, we bear fruit and participate in the work of the Kingdom of God. May we strive to be faithful branches of the true vine, drawing our strength from Jesus, so that our lives may bear abundant fruit for His glory.

And to our First Communion students, may the love of Jesus that you receive today strengthen you and guide you to live lives full of love, service, and faith. May the Holy Spirit continue to help you grow in your relationship with Christ.