

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

FIRST READING

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Acts 9:26-28

Barnabas explained to the apostles how the Lord appeared to Saul and spoke to him on his journey.

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the followers. But they were all afraid of him, because they did not believe he was a true follower.

Then Barnabas helped him by taking him to the apostles. He explained how on the road to Damascus, Saul had seen the Lord and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. Barnabas also said that when Saul was in Damascus, he had spoken bravely in the name of Jesus.

Saul moved about freely with the followers in Jerusalem and told everyone about the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial P

Psalm 22:2

SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of John

1 John 3:18
God's commandment is this:
love others by helping them.

Children, you show love for others
by truly helping them, and not merely by talking about it.

The word of the Lord.

Alleluia

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

John 15:4a, 5b

Live in me and let me live in you,
says the Lord;
my branches bear much fruit.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

✦ A reading from

Jesus said to his disciples
"I am the true vine,
and my Father is the gardener.
He cuts away every branch
that does not bear fruit,
but he trims the branches
so that they will bear more fruit.

"You are already clean
because of the word I have said to you.

"Stay joined to me,
and I will stay in you,
just as a branch is joined to the vine
unless it stays joined,
you cannot produce fruit.

"I am the vine,
if you stay joined to me,
then you will produce much fruit.
But you cannot produce fruit
unless you stay joined to me.

"Stay joined to me,
and let my Father dwell in you,
then you can produce much fruit,
and your prayers will be answered.

"When you have loved one another
as I have loved you,
my Father will love you,
and I will love you.

The gospel of John 15:1-8

✦ **A reading from the holy gospel according to John**

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I am the true vine,
and my Father is the gardener.

He cuts away every branch of mine
that does not produce fruit.

But he trims clean every branch that does produce fruit,
so that it will produce even more fruit.

"You are already clean because of what I have said to you.

"Stay joined to me,
and I will stay joined to you.
Just as a branch cannot produce fruit
unless it stays joined to the vine,
you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.

"I am the vine, and you are the branches.
If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you,
then you will produce lots of fruit.
But you cannot do anything without me.

"Stay joined to me
and let my teachings become part of you.
Then you can pray for whatever you want,
and your prayer will be answered.

"When you become fruitful disciples of mine,
my Father will be honored."

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

John 15:1-5, 7-8

*All who live in me,
and I in them,
bear much fruit.*

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

May 2, 2021

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Today's Readings

Acts 9:26–28
Psalm 22:27, 30–31
1 John 3:18
John 15:1–5, 7–8

We Stay Close to Jesus

Preparation

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies at the start of the session.



Prepare with Prayer

You, LORD, brought me safely through birth, and you protected me when I was a baby at my mother's breast. From the day I was born, I have been in your care, and from the time of my birth, you have been my God. (Psalm 22:9-10)

Scripture Background

The reading from Acts clearly shows the Apostles' leadership role in the early Church. While Paul's conversion is still fresh, Jerusalem's Christians understandably do not want to accept him into their number.

But the Apostles have the last word. Barnabas intercedes, and soon Paul is "with the followers in Jerusalem" (Acts 9:28). Christian unity is maintained, and followers of "the Way" once again prove that they are Christians by their love.

In the Second Reading, John asserts quite simply that love is as love does. Kind words are nothing without kind deeds to accompany them.

In the Gospel, it is surely good deeds that Jesus has in mind when he urges his followers to stay joined to him and "produce lots of fruit" (John 15:5). Only a few verses later, in John 15:12, he commands them to love each other, as he has loved them.

In identifying his Father as the gardener who tends the vine, Jesus acknowledges God in Heaven as the source of all love. Like a prized grapevine heavy with fruitful branches, Jesus mediates God's love to his followers, who in turn must mediate God's love

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a gold cloth, place:

- ▶ a Lectionary
- ▶ a battery-operated candle
- ▶ a crucifix
- ▶ a houseplant or a picture of a grapevine.

Suggested Music

See page 64 for more information.

Gathering: "God Gave Me Hands" (Seeds CD-1, Track #13) or "Come Do This in Memory of Me" (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #20)

Gospel Acclamation: "Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

to the world. If his followers fail to do this, they are useless and will be cast into the fire (see John 15:6).

For obvious reasons, this harsh pronouncement is omitted from verses of today's Gospel for the children, but for adults it underscores the seriousness of Jesus' message.

Children's Connections

Today you will begin with the story of Paul's conversion because, without it, the First Reading will make little sense when it is read. Besides, sometimes it is good for children to hear a Bible story in updated language.

Without deviating from essential facts, take poetic license in paraphrasing Acts 9:1–19 for the group. You might wish to don a toga and tell the story in first person, as if you were Paul recounting what happened to you on the road to Damascus.

Of course another option is to read aloud the story. *A Child's Bible* by Shirley Steen and Anne Edwards has Paul's conversion story in it; so do other books.

Follow the usual advice for reading to children:

1. Practice reading your selection in advance.
2. Prepare an introduction, such as, "We often read letters from Saint Paul at our liturgies—but did you know that at one time he hated Christians and tried to kill them?"
3. Vary your voice when speaking the words of Paul, Jesus, and Ananias.
4. Let your vocal tones and facial expressions convey the emotions of the story.
5. End with, "And that's the story of Saint Paul." Pause, and let the children react to what they have heard. Don't ask if they liked the story because they will say yes just to please you.

More About ...

Paul's Conversion

The Acts of the Apostles describes key events in the development of the early Church. In a sense it is Part II of the life of Christ — Christ as he lives on in his Church. The author describes especially important events more than once.

Such is the case for the story of Paul's conversion, which appears in Chapters 9, 22, and 26 of Acts. Each time the details slightly differ for reasons knowable perhaps only to the author.

In Acts 9, for example, Paul sees a flash of light and hears the voice of Christ, but his companions only hear the voice.

In Acts 22 and 26, they see the light but don't hear the voice. In his *Collegeville Bible Commentary* (1991), William S. Kurz, SJ, notes that mystics often see visions or hear voices that bystanders do not.

The crucial point is that Paul had an encounter with Christ as life-changing as any the Twelve Apostles had.

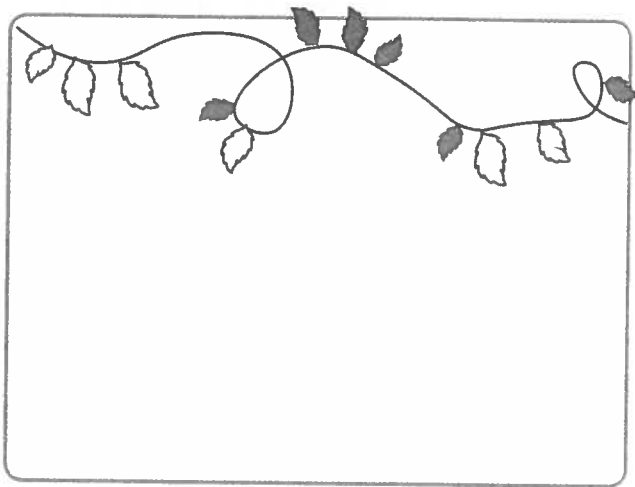
The Children's Leaflet

The children's leaflet for this week helps them learn about staying connected to Jesus through a summary of the Scripture story, prayer, and a creative activity.

If you haven't already done so, distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

Activity

This week's leaflet provides a family reconciliation service to recognize that we all need to pay attention to one another if we are to grow strong on the vine together. Drawing ways to connect to Jesus helps children understand today's lesson.



The Liturgy of the Word

Gathering

As the children enter the worship area, play the suggested Gathering song. After asking the children to be seated, tell them that today you will begin with a story. Then put in your own words Acts 9:1–19, or, if you prefer, read aloud the story of Paul's conversion from a children's Bible. When you are finished, let the children comment or ask questions, then invite them to spend a moment in silence.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us bow our heads to pray. Our response to each petition will be, "Open our eyes, Lord." Lord, that we might see you alive in the Church, we pray.

Children: Open our eyes, Lord.

Leader: Lord, that we might see you alive in our neighbors, we pray.

Children: Open our eyes, Lord.

Leader: Lord, that we might see you alive in the holy Scripture, we pray.

Children: Open our eyes, Lord.

Leader: Lord Jesus, like Paul, sometimes we see you without realizing it's you. You live in the Church, you live in our neighbors, you live in the words of Scripture. Every time you are near, may we remember to ask, "Is that you, Lord?" This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

Leader: After Paul heard the voice of Jesus on the road to Damascus, he didn't want to kill Christians anymore. In fact, he wanted to become one of them! In today's First Reading, we'll hear how the Christians in Jerusalem reacted to Paul's change of heart.

Read Acts 9:26–28. Then say, "The Word of the Lord."

Children: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The Psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

Leader: I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.

Children: I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.

Leader: *Read Psalm 22:27, 30–31.*

Second Reading

Leader: In the First Reading, we saw that Paul's hatred for Christians turned into love. After that, he needed to prove his love. In the Second Reading, John tells us how we can prove our love. *Read 1 John 3:18.* Then say, "The Word of the Lord."

Children: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Gospel Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

Leader: In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that we can do much good in the world, but only if we stay connected to him.

The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your Spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of John.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.

Leader: *Read John 15:1–5, 7–8. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”*

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Use the houseplant or picture of a grapevine to review the main ideas in the Gospel. Include the following thoughts and questions:

- ▶ We are like the branches on this plant; Jesus is like the vine; God in Heaven is like the person who cares for the plant.
- ▶ The leafy branches add beauty to the world only if they stay attached to the vine. What would happen to a branch if I cut it off? That’s what happens to you when you cut yourself off from Jesus by sinning.
- ▶ Do you know anyone who grows grapevines or apple trees where they live? Then you know that sometimes that person needs to do some trimming to make room for bigger and better fruit. In the same way, sometimes God takes something away from you, but only so that you can become more fruitful.
- ▶ Jesus says, “When you become fruitful disciples of mine, my Father will be honored” (John 15:8). When that happens, you are doing what you were born to do!

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with, “Yes, I do believe.” Do you believe you live and grow in the garden of God, your loving Creator?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Leader: Do you believe you have life through Jesus Christ, God’s only Son?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Leader: Do you believe Jesus shares with you his Holy Spirit?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: In God’s garden, Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Because we cannot do anything without Jesus, let us pray for his help wherever it is most needed in our world. To each petition, please respond, “Lord, hear our prayer.” That everywhere on earth, leaders of the Church will help people connect with Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: That here in our parish, we will live fruitful lives and give honor to God our Father, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: That in our [town, city, county], we will truly help others and not just talk about it, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Let us pray. Jesus said that if we stay joined to him and learn his teachings, we can pray for whatever we want and our prayers will be answered. That’s because we’ll be so much like him that we’ll want whatever he wants. Loving God, all that we ask for today, we ask through Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven’t already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week’s Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

May 2, 2021

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Children Celebrate!

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Today's Readings

Acts 9:26–28
Psalm 22:27, 30–31
1 John 3:18
John 15:1–5, 7–8



We Pray

Lord, thank you for being our teacher. May we always remember what we learn from you. Amen.

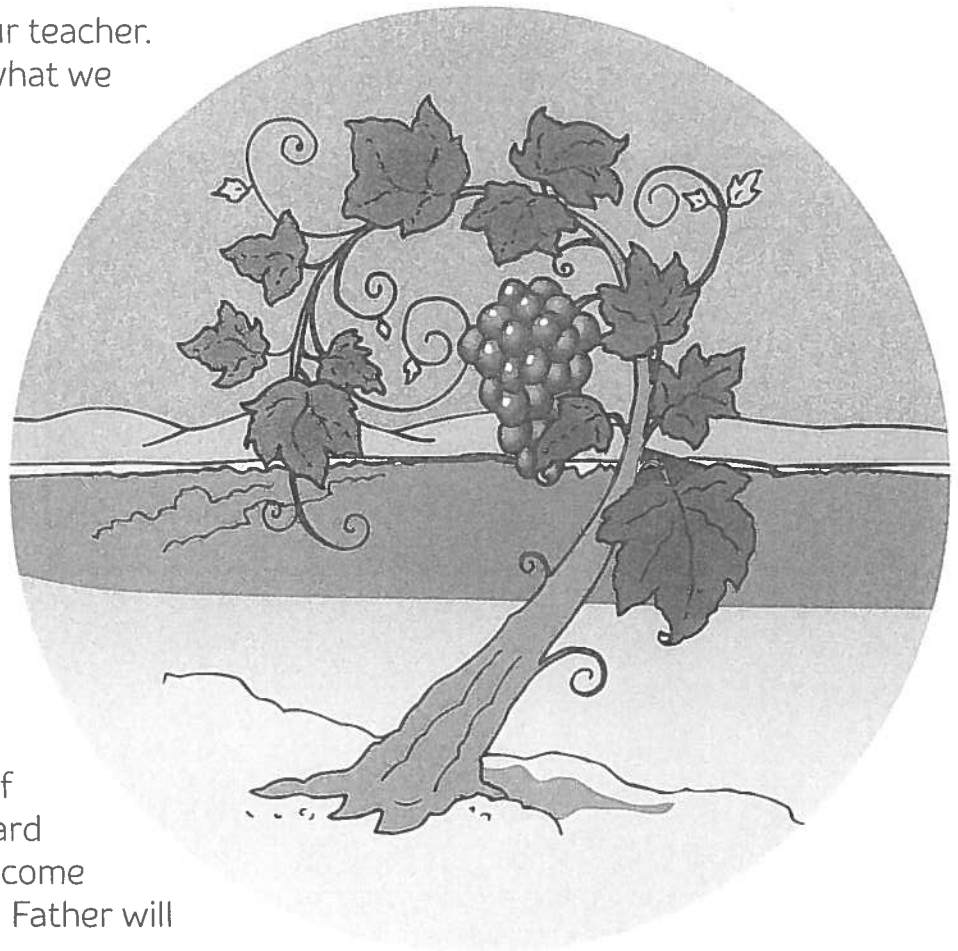


The Word of God This Week

We Stay Close to Jesus

Jesus said, “My Father is the gardener, I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me.

“Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Your prayers will be heard and answered. When you become fruitful disciples of mine, my Father will be honored.”

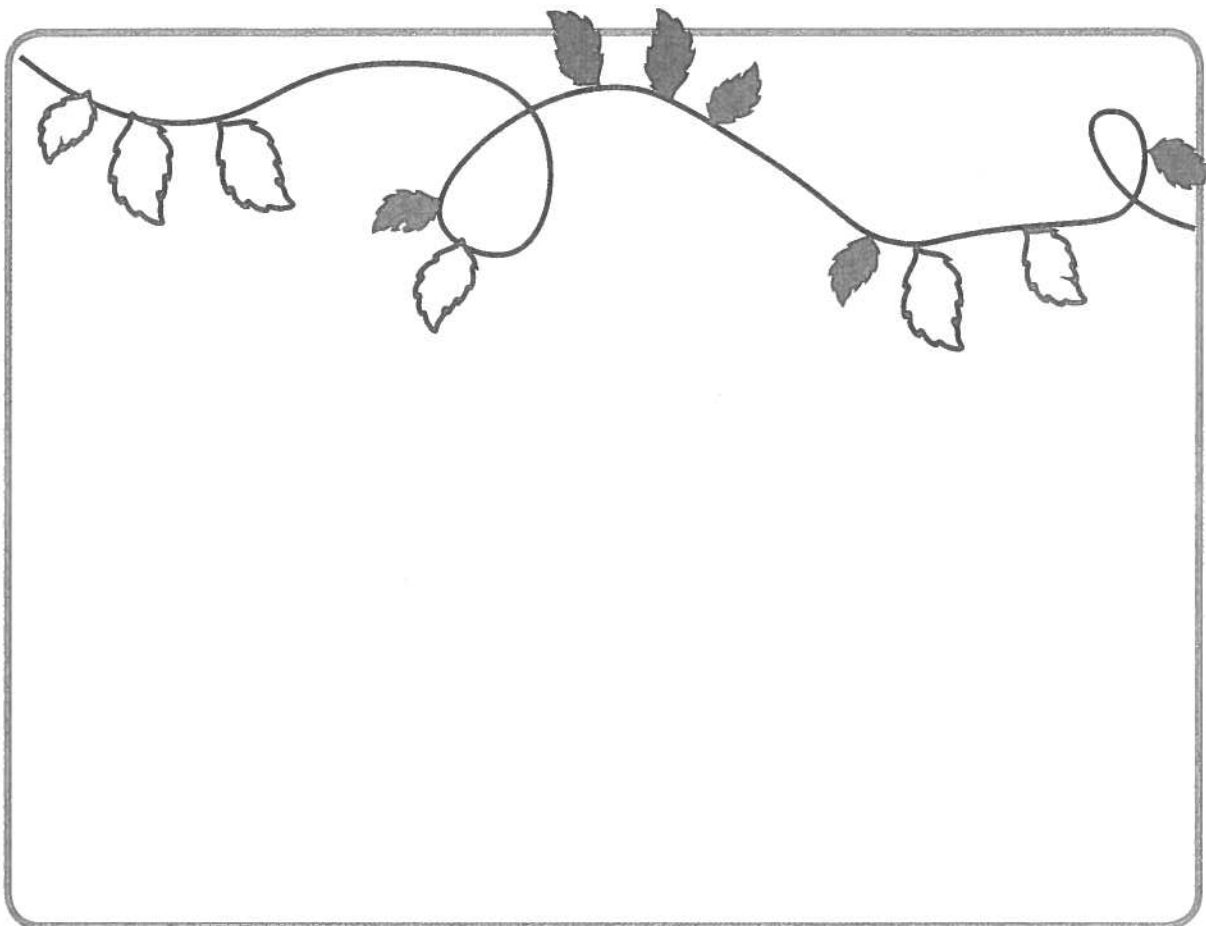


Visit pflaum.com/spring2021YearB for this week's Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, and more



Activity

Jesus told us that sometimes we get separated from him. In the space below, draw some ways you can connect to Jesus. Color in the vine when you are done.



Family Corner

Faith Focus

Jesus speaks about being connected to the vine and bearing fruit. He also refers to problems encountered when a branch is separated from the vine. Our actions can disconnect us from him and from one another. Vines and flowers need to be tended to thrive. So do families. Sometimes we let the weeds of hurt take root and grow. In some cases this even causes a family member to separate from the rest of the family.

Family Activity

Plan a family reconciliation service:

- Give slips of paper to each family member. Everyone should note what might be happening in the family that causes anger or hurt.
- Gather around a lit candle, and pray an Our Father together.
- As each note is read, share ideas about how to help this situation. Make sure the discussion stays positive and is not an attack.
- Pray an Act of Contrition together.

GROWING+ WITH THE gospel CYCLE B

PUZZLE

Unscramble words from today's Gospel:

vine Father honored
joined pray gardener
branch fruit clean

inev _ _ _ _
 v i n e

Fareth _ _ _ _

genarder _ _ _ _

chanbr _ _ _ _

fritu _ _ _ _

lecana _ _ _ _

jedoin _ _ _ _

rapy _ _ _ _

onhored _ _ _ _

+ MISSION

Read Galatians 5:22-23 with your family. Write down the nine different kinds of fruit that will grow from your faith, when you stay connected to Jesus.

COLOR

Read the Gospel of the week and color the image.





GOSPEL

Put a brand new light bulb in a lamp. Turn the lamp on. It shines brightly. Now, unplug the lamp. The lamp goes dark. It might be a nice lamp. It might have a new light bulb. Yet, without being plugged in to electricity, the lamp cannot shine. In today's Gospel, Jesus is the vine and you are a branch. As long as you are attached to Jesus, your faith can grow fruit like love, kindness and gentleness. If you break away from Jesus, your faith will die, and you will not grow any fruit. Stay plugged in to Jesus, so you can shine. Stay connected to Jesus, so your faith can grow fruit.

PRAYER

God, help me to stay connected to Jesus.

DRAW

Draw a picture of a tall vine with one branch for every person in your family. Write Jesus' name on the vine, and write the names of your family members on the branches.

GROWING

WITH THE *Gospel*

CYCLE B

PUZZLE

Which picture name begins with this letter?
Circle the picture that starts with that sound.

G



F



J



MISSION

I will love God more than anything and love my neighbors as myself.

COLOR

Read the Gospel of the week and color the image.





GOSPEL

When you go into a strange place, you like to stay close to your parents. You trust them to keep you safe. Jesus wants you to stay close to him every day. Jesus is your vine. You are one of his branches. Learn his teachings and obey them. When you stay close to Jesus and follow his commandments, you can pray for whatever you want, and God the Father will answer your prayers.

PRAYER

Jesus, help me stay close to you and follow your commandments.

DRAW

Draw Jesus as a vine with you, your family and friends for its branches.



BECAUSE VIBRANT
CHURCHES MATTER