

## Jesus the Vine and the Branches (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

### Acts 9:26-31—Saul Begins to Preach the Good News in Jerusalem

1. Conversion: Saul encounters the risen Christ and is baptized (Acts 9:1-19)
2. Damascus: Paul immediately begins proclaiming “Jesus” in synagogues (Acts 9:20-22)
3. Plot to Kill Paul: Paul is rescued from his Jewish opponents (Acts 9:23-25)
4. Jerusalem: Paul comes to Jerusalem and “attempted to join the disciples” (9:26)
5. Hellenists: Greek-speaking Jews who seek to “kill” Paul (9:29)
6. Spread of the Church: Judea, Galilee, Samaria; conversions are “multiplied” (9:31)

### Psalm 22—The Ends of the Earth Shall Turn to the Lord

1. Psalm 22: the psalm prayed by Jesus on the Cross (“My God, my God...”) (v. 21)
2. Conversion of Gentiles: “all the ends of the earth shall... turn to the LORD” (v. 27)

### 1 John 3:18-24—Loving in Deed and in Truth

1. Love: “not in word or speech but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18)

### John 15:1-8—Jesus the Vine and the Branches

1. Last Supper in Jerusalem: Jesus’ “Last Supper Discourse” in John
2. The Golden Vine in the Jerusalem Temple:

The holy temple... was covered with gold, and through it the first edifice was visible to a spectator without in all its grandeur and the surroundings of the inner gate all gleaming with gold fell beneath his eye... It had, moreover, above it those *golden vines, from which depended grape clusters as tall as a man...* (Josephus, *War* 5:207-211; trans. LCL)

3. True Vine = Jesus (15:1; cf. Golden Vine in the Temple)
4. Vinedresser = the Father (15:1)
5. Fruitless Branches = Disciples who do not “bear fruit” (keep his commandments)
  - a. Cut Off: separation from Christ (“taken away”) (15:2); do not “abide” in Christ
  - b. Burned: damnation; eternal separation (“thrown into the fire”)
6. Fruitful Branches = Disciples who “bear much fruit” (15:8)
  - a. Pruned: excess is cut away in order to “bear more fruit” (15:2)
  - b. Abide: must “abide” or “remain” in the vine; communion with Christ (15:5)
  - c. Word: Jesus’ “words” “abide” in the fruitful disciple (15:7)
7. Separation: “*apart from me you can do nothing*” (15:5)
8. True Disciples: “bear *much* fruit” and so “prove to be my disciples” (15:8)

### The Catechism: Abiding in the Word of Christ

Jesus says: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” The fruit referred to in this saying is *the holiness of a life made fruitful by union with Christ*. When we believe in

Jesus Christ, partake of his mysteries, and keep his commandments, the Savior himself comes to love, in us, his Father and his brethren, our Father and our brethren. *His person becomes, through the Spirit, the living and interior rule of our activity.* (CCC 2074)

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

1. How does the life of the apostle Paul prove the truth of Jesus' words that his true disciples will "bear much fruit" (John 15:8)?

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2. What light does Josephus' information about the Golden Vine in the Temple in Jerusalem shed on Jesus' identification of himself as the "true vine" (John 15:1)?

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3. Jesus says that the Father "prunes" his disciples who "bear fruit" (John 15:2). What do you think this "pruning" entails?

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### For Further Study

1. Peter M. J. Stravinskias. *Salvation Outside the Church?* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2002). A concise, readable overview of the Church's teaching on the controversial question of whether there is any salvation "outside the church."
2. Joel C. Elowsky, *John* (2 vols.; Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IV; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 2.158-170. A wonderful collection of ancient Christian interpretations of John's Gospel and the Good Shepherd discourse.