

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY

5th Sunday of Easter, May 2, 2021

We begin May with the Feast Day of St. Joseph the Worker. Since we are in the year of St. Joseph, I wanted to ask the patron saint of the Universal Church, fathers, workers, travelers, immigrants, unborn children, and happy death to continue to pray for us. During May, we will also remember our Mothers, especially our Spiritual Mother Mary. We ask Mary to pray for us and intercede for us in our faith journey.

Still in this Pandemic year with signs of improving hope, especially in our state, we will also be celebrating many First Communions. We are spreading them out this year to allow parents, grandparents and family to attend the First Communion Masses. So we honor St. Joseph, our Blessed Mother, and Jesus, as the Bread of Life. Therefore I ask St. Joseph and Mary our Mother especially to pray for our First Communion children and their families.

Focusing on Holy Communion reminds us all that we always have a special invitation to be with Jesus. To be in communion with God, with self and others. Jesus gives Himself to us in many ways, but most intimately in the gift of Himself in the Eucharist, in Holy Communion. So who better to teach us how to love Jesus than St. Joseph and Mother Mary; God is and always was the center of their lives and hearts.

Jesus is always with us. In John's Gospel Chapter 6 after the multiplication of the fish and loaves, Jesus says, "**I am** the Bread of Life, whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." Then Jesus says, "**I am** the Living Bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever, and the bread I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." For children, and all of us who are blessed to receive the Lord in the Eucharist, this is the heart of our Faith. To know the very life of Jesus, His death and resurrection, is living within us.

In John's Gospel today we hear from the farewell discourses. These farewell discourses take place in John's Gospel Chapter 14-17, known as Jesus last words to his disciples and his church. In Chapter 15, Jesus says, "**I am the true Vine**, my Father is the Vine grower. And again, **I am the Vine**, you are the branches, remain in me, as I remain in you. In doing so we can bear much fruit, apart from Jesus the true Vine." Jesus says, "Without me you can do nothing."

So we have Jesus saying to us, "**I am the Bread of Life**" and "**I am the True Vine**." When Jesus says "**I am**", he is referring to **I AM**, in the Old Testament. Remember when God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, "**I am who I Am**". God's name is **I am**. The Hebrew people revered His name so great they would not even say His name. They called Him the God of Abraham, the God of

Isaac, the God of Jacob. So any time you hear Jesus say, “**I am**”, this is what he means. I am God, always with you. I am the Bread of Life, I am the True Vine, and you are the branches. We have a God who is very near and close to His people.

There is a very special uniting that takes place between God and His people. This uniting is made possible through Jesus. This uniting means, we belong to God. We were united to God, by our Baptism. It is like this example from my childhood.

My Papa, who came from Italy had many Pecan trees around his house, which later would be my family’s house. He grafted two different varieties of pecan trees, my understanding was to produce a stronger, and more fruitful tree. And yes they did, in time we had more pecans than we knew what to do with. As young boys we hated them, because we had to pick them up, then crack them. Every year there were always many pecans. We supplied the town with pecans.

Like the grafting of the trees, God has so grafted us on to Himself. As long as we remain united we grow, into the life with God. Jesus says “I am the true vine, united to me, you can bear great fruit”. We are all part of the vine when we remain in Christ and seek to do His will.

Christ’s life happens within us, when we remain close to Him. It happens when we give ourselves to Jesus. It can happen when we allow the Word of God to enter every part of our lives. It can happen when we learn to love as Jesus loves us. It can happen when we live our faith before others, even when it is difficult and challenging. It can happen when we forgive others like Jesus forgives us. It can happen when we allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. It can happen, if will we allow God to live within us. As Jesus says “I am the Vine”, we are his branches, united with Him. His life lives within us. As we receive the I AM, the Bread of Life and the True Vine, let’s allow His life to live within.