

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY
6th Sunday of Easter, May 9, 2021

We thank our Mothers today! We pray God's blessings upon you and your families. Today, our Bishop has a message for us that we will listen to after Communion. He addresses two areas of good news. One concerning the COVID-19 restriction issues, and two, the upcoming ordinations, on Saturday May 29.

Last week and this week's Gospel is taken from John's Gospel Chapter 15, "I am vine you are the branches." Recall from last week the word **uniting**. This uniting is made possible through Jesus. Jesus, by being who He is and what He continues to do for us, has grafted us on to God. We belong to God. We are united to God by our Baptism. I gave the example of my Papa's pecan trees, the grafting he did to produce a lot of pecans.

Papa's grafting of the two different varieties of pecan trees made the pecan trees stronger and more fruitful. 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. We are stronger and can only be fruitful when we stay united to 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 constantly seek to do His will. This is the life of Joseph, Mary and Jesus, always doing the will of God. United was the word for reflection last week. This week's word is abide, or remain.

Abiding in Christ, or Remaining in Christ, comes from the Greek word *menó*. It will be used over forty times in John and nearly thirty times in his three epistles. It obviously was a very significant term for John the Beloved. Why? It is because of his loving relationship he had with Jesus, and Jesus had with him.

Though it can simply indicate dwelling or staying in a place. John will often use it to speak of a deeper spiritual indwelling and sharing of life. Jesus will use *menó* to describe the mysterious inner life he shares from all eternity with his Father and the future in dwelling of the Spirit of Truth within his followers.

It also refers to a shared commitment. By standing firmly and faithfully in the gospel, Christ remains in us, all who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.

John also uses this word *menó*, abide, to describe fruit flourishing and growing because it abides (*menó*) in the vine. This is in John, Chapter 15. So we need to pray, Lord I want to be a fruitful disciple for you and abide in you more and more. And if you ask this prayer to the Lord today, you will need to ask, how do we do this?

Referring to the word remaining or abiding in Jesus, is found in John 8 and in John 6. These scriptures state: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (8:31) and “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (6:56).

I hope these words sound familiar to you, especially as we gather here at Mass. These two phrases of scripture are the two main parts of the Mass. In these verses we can discern the two tables from which we are fed – the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. They are the primary ways Jesus comes to abide in us and we can abide faithfully and fruitfully in him.

Abiding in Jesus is the gift of God’s eternal friendship which He has with all of us, his chosen people. Remaining in Christ’s loving presence, we need to listen to His words, and open our hearts to receive the Lord in the Eucharist. Then we too will understand what John is referring to so many times in his gospel and in his letters, God is an abiding friend who is always with us. John is telling us, that my relationship with Jesus is now open to you, abide in Christ’s love.