

5th Sunday of Easter

28th April 2024 Readings

FIRST READING

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 9:26-31

When Saul got to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him: they could not believe he was really a disciple. Barnabas, however, took charge of him, introduced him to the apostles, and explained how the Lord had appeared to Saul and spoken to him on his journey, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Saul now started to go round with them in Jerusalem, preaching fearlessly in the name of the Lord. But after he had spoken to the Hellenists, and argued with them, they became determined to kill him. When the brothers knew, they took him to Caesarea, and sent him off from there to Tarsus.

The churches throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, building themselves up, living in the fear of the Lord, and filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 21: 26-28. 26. 30-32. Response v.26

R/. You, Lord, are my praise in the great assembly.

My vows I will pay before those who fear him.
The poor shall eat and shall have their fill.
They shall praise the Lord, those who seek him.
May their hearts live for ever and ever! **R/.**

All the earth shall remember and return to the Lord,
all families of the nations worship before him;
They shall worship him, all the mighty of the earth;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust.
R/.

And my soul shall live for him, my children serve him.
They shall tell of the Lord to generations yet to come,
declare his faithfulness to peoples yet unborn:
'These things the Lord has done.' **R/.**



SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St John 3:18-24

My children,
our love is not to be just words or mere talk,
but something real and active;
only by this can we be certain
that we are children of the truth
and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence,
whatever accusations it may raise against us,
because God is greater than our conscience and he
knows everything.
My dear people, if we cannot be condemned by our
own conscience, we need not be afraid in God's
presence, and whatever we ask him, we shall receive,
because we keep his commandments
and live the kind of life that he wants.
His commandments are these:
that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ
and that we love one another as he told us to.
Whoever keeps his commandments
lives in God and God lives in him.
We know that he lives in us
by the Spirit that he has given us.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

John 15:4-5

Alleluia, alleluia!
Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.
Whoever remains in me bears fruit in plenty.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 15:1-8

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said:

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away,
and every branch that does bear fruit
he prunes to make it bear even more.
You are pruned already,
by means of the word that I have spoken to you.
Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,
but must remain part of the vine,
neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me, with me in him,
bears fruit in plenty;
for cut off from me you can do nothing.
Anyone who does not remain in me
is like a branch that has been thrown away – he
withers;
these branches are collected and thrown on the fire,
and they are burnt. If you remain in me and my
words remain in you,
you may ask what you will
and you shall get it.
It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear
much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



5th SUNDAY of EASTER

Lectionary Year B

The Word of God

Saint of the Week

Thursday 2nd May 2024

Saint Athanasius (295 - 373)

He was born in Alexandria. He assisted Bishop Alexander at the Council of Nicaea and later succeeded him as bishop. He fought hard against Arianism all his life, undergoing many sufferings and spending a total of 17 years in exile. He wrote outstanding works to explain and defend orthodoxy.

Athanasius's passion for the truth seems tactless to many of us today, to the point where some Catholic devotional works even express embarrassment over it. This is grotesque. Before we congratulate ourselves on being more gentle and civilised than Athanasius and his contemporaries, we should look at the lack of charity that characterizes academic controversies today (from string theory to global warming) and the way that some of the participants are willing to use any weapon that comes to hand, from legal persecution to accusations of madness to actual assault. The matters in dispute with the Arians were more important than any of these scientific questions. They were vital to the very nature of Christianity, and, as Cardinal Newman put it, the trouble was that at that time the laity tended to be champions of orthodoxy while their bishops (seduced by closeness to imperial power) tended not to be. The further trouble (adds Chadwick) is that the whole thing became tangled up with matters of power, organization and authority, and with cultural differences between East and West. Athanasius was accused of treason and murder, embezzlement and sacrilege. In the fight against him, any weapon would do.

Think about this disciple of the Lord, Paul. In the first reading today, from the Acts of the Apostles, he is still called Saul. He had persecuted the Church ferociously and now wants to be part of the Church. The fear of the early followers is completely understandable.

In the second reading today, from the First Letter of John, we are reminded of the teachings of Jesus while He lived on this earth. It is Jesus who tells us through His followers: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. What does that love mean? It is not about feeling good about another person. No, it is about doing good for the other person, no matter who he or she is. If that person has completely offended us, has destroyed someone we love or even ourselves, that does not matter. We must love that other person completely.

And so we come to the Gospel of today, from the Gospel of Saint John. This again teaches us about love when it teaches us to remain in Jesus. This is not just a thought or a feeling, but an actual choice every day. We must remain in Jesus by following His example and doing what He told us. And the principle teaching of Jesus is always that we must love God and love one another. That love for others is always tested if we love our enemies. It is not tested if we only love our friends.

Christ is risen! Christ rose from the dead in order that we might have life. The life we have is not the life that world wants us to have. We are not here to seek pleasure and enjoyment and power and money. We are here to love and to sacrifice ourselves in love just as Jesus did. If we do this, the life of the world to come will be ours in abundance, in every way. Jesus is not threatening us, but telling us the way to live in order to rejoice forever with abundant life.

We can understand this love so easily. If we look only for ourselves, then in eternity we will have only ourselves. That is not much consolation! If we love God and others in this life, we will have God and others forever. Let us choose wisely now so that we can live with joy and delight forever. Christ is risen. Alleluia.



Prayer of the Week

An Easter Prayer

Draw us forth, God of all creation.
Draw us forward and away from limited certainty
into the immense world of your love.
Give us the capacity to even for a moment
taste the richness of the feast you give us.
Give us the peace to live with uncertainty,
with questions,
with doubts.
Help us to experience the resurrection anew
with open wonder and an increasing ability
to see you in the people of Easter.

Amen.