

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

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. *First Reading*

My soul shall live for the Lord. *Psalm*

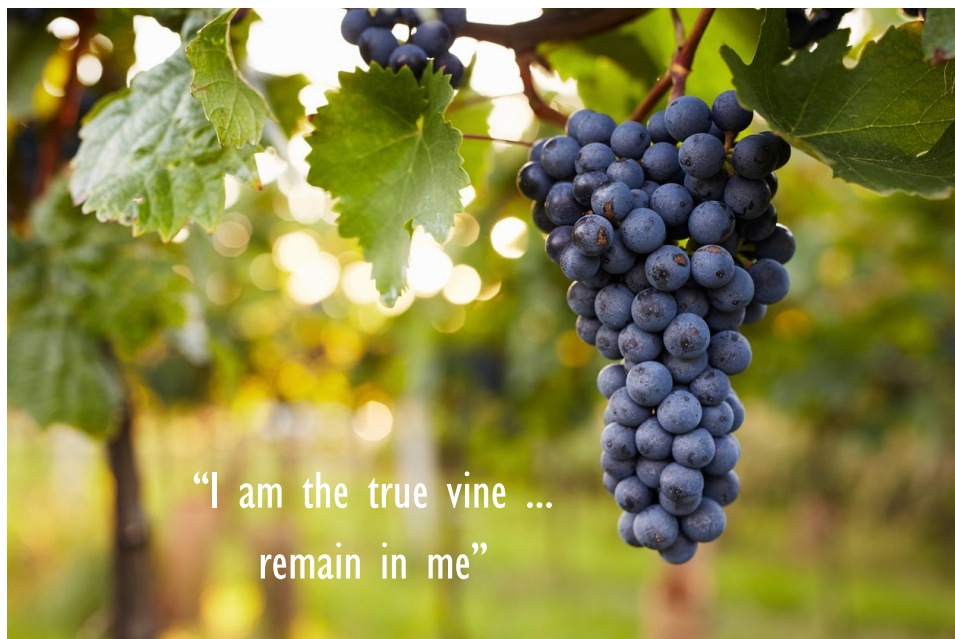
'Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.' *Gospel*

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
you have revealed to the nations your saving power
and filled all ages with the words of a new song.

Hear the echo of this hymn.
Give us voice to sing your praise
throughout this season of joy.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Acts 9: 26–31; Psalm 21 (22); 1 John 3: 18–24; John 15: 1–8



"I am the true vine ...
remain in me"

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Fifth Sunday of Easter
Year B, 28th April, 2024

'I am the vine, you are the branches.'

We are deeply rooted in the love of Christ. The risen Christ is the source of all that we need to grow ever closer to God.

In the **First Reading**, we hear how shortly after his conversion, St Paul was initially treated with fear and disdain by those he had been persecuting. Paul's zeal for the Lord was grounded in a very personal encounter with Christ. Knowing that he was loved completely despite all that he had done before, gave him the encouragement to spread the Good News.

As a faithful worshipping Jew, Paul would have been familiar with praying today's **Psalm**, an encouraging song of praise. It foretells how generations yet to come will be filled with the love of the Lord.

In the **Second Reading**, the writer counsels that even if we feel we have failed or fallen short in our response to God's love for us, his love is so immense and all-forgiving that we need not be afraid. Knowing this, we can be free to live out the great commandment to love one another. The beautiful image of a vine carefully tended by the Father is used by Jesus to describe his and our relationship to God (**Gospel**). We are all sustained in an intimate co-existence with the Holy Trinity. Jesus invites us to remain close to him. Without him, our life is nothing, with him, we discover our true identity and purpose

This week, let us try to consciously be aware that we are branches of one vine, rooted in God's love. Although we may have our differences and shortcomings, we are forever loved completely by a God of compassion, love and forgiveness. Let us pray that like St Paul, we will have the grace to live out this amazing Good News.



Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God,
constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us,
that those you were pleased to make new in Holy Baptism
may, under your protective care, bear much fruit
and come to the joys of life eternal.

Second Reading 1 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 the 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 them.

We know that he lives in us by the Spirit that he has given us.

I invite my mind and body to settle and become still before the Lord.

I purposefully take my time to enter into prayer.

When I feel ready, I begin to read this letter of St John.

I read the passage slowly, re-reading as often as I need to.

I notice which words or phrases my attention has been drawn to focus upon.

With curiosity, I explore why the Spirit is inviting me to listen and respond to these words.

It might help my pondering to become aware of how I feel when I focus on those particular words.

Have I ever felt condemned by my own conscience, my own inner critic?

If so, how does it feel to be so clearly told that no matter how much I judge myself harshly, God knows me and loves me completely? I take a few moments to let that truth really sink deep within my awareness.

As I turn again to the passage, perhaps I imagine that this is a letter written to my own faith community, or even as a personal letter of spiritual encouragement to me.

How might we – or I myself – transform our love into 'something real and active'?

How will others know that they are in the presence of the love of God made manifest in his followers?

I spend a few more moments talking to the Lord as I would to a dear friend about this time of quiet, and then end my prayer with words of gratitude.

Gospel John 15: 1–8

Jesus said to his disciples:

'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 – they wither; 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.'

I go to my place of prayer, and in the silence of my inner being, I bring myself into the presence of our loving God. I ready myself for prayer with a gently alert posture, whether I am sitting, standing or walking.

Once I am ready, I begin to read the Gospel passage.

I recall that these words of teaching were given by Jesus at the Last Supper. They are words of encouragement, offered to strengthen and give courage to his followers who would soon face loss and desolation. They are also shared as words of encouragement for me.

Using my imagination, I place myself within the scene. I try to get a sense of the posture, facial expression and tone of voice that Jesus would have used when he shared this message with his close friends and followers.

Perhaps I imagine Jesus looking lovingly into my being with great wisdom and understanding, telling me that I am already part of the vine, and that there is nothing that can separate me from the love of God (*Romans 8: 38–39*).

As I listen to Jesus, how do I choose to respond to these words?

Do I recognise that I am part of the living vine?

Is there anything that I need to let go of, so that I might be more fruitful?

What words of Jesus do I desire to remain with me today?

Inspired by the Spirit, with Jesus by my side, I ask the Father for whatever I desire in order to deepen my relationship with God.