

May 2024

## GREETING FROM FATHER JIM:

The joyous proclamation, *"He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!"* resonates deeply within me as I express profound gratitude for being embraced into the community of All Saints. It is an immense blessing to be surrounded by such remarkable individuals who exude love for Christ, His church, and one another. Participating, even in a modest capacity, in this vibrant parish life is both enriching and humbling.



Having been nurtured within the Polish National Catholic Church, I hold a profound appreciation for our collective history, the pursuit of truth, the labor, and the resilience demonstrated by our community. Memories of

my grandparents recounting the tales of Franciszek Hodur, the founding Prime Bishop, are deeply etched in my consciousness. Originating from St. Adalbert's in Dickson City, Pennsylvania, a parish that has been graced by the presence of numerous esteemed priests and prime bishops, I am indebted to its robust foundation. Growing up in the Scranton area afforded me the privilege of forming enduring friendships with fellow Nationals hailing from various corners of the United States.

Following my collegiate years, I embarked on a spiritual searching faith journey that led me away from the PNCC for more than two decades. Despite my quest for religious truth and my involvement in church activities, I remained distanced from the PNCC. My endeavors included contributing to the establishment of a Mennonite Church in Lexington, KY, serving as Minister of Christian Education and Music at the Church of God in Danville, KY, and hosting a Christian radio program titled "Meet the Challenge with Dr. P." Yet, amidst these explorations, I ultimately discovered that my true spiritual home resides in communion with Jesus Christ within the framework of the National Church

and for the past 20 years have served our church as lay person, deacon and now priest.

I eagerly anticipate forging connections with fellow parishioners, engaging in collaborative efforts to propagate the Gospel, and relishing the camaraderie that permeates this community. Indeed, there is no greater privilege than being part of All Saints and standing among the saints who grace this parish.

In His service,

*Father Jim*

Father Jim

## CONTENTS

Easter Festivities and Celebration	2
YMS of R National Events	3
Parish Opportunities and Events	4
Crowning of St. Mary	5
Good Shepherd Sermon	7
Peace be with you. Sermon	8
"Have you anything to eat?"	9
"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine grower."	11

May 2024

## EASTER CELEBRATION



*The excitement of hiding and discovering eggs added to the delight of the occasion, accompanied by games and delightful treats.*



*Easter Food Blessing was preceded by the Liturgies of the Blessing of Fire, The Pascal Candle and Water.*



*Foot Washing as part of Holy Thursday. Michael commented that the water was cold, very cold. Note the light shining on this pious and humble practice.*

MAY	JUNE
<b>BIRTHDAY</b>	5 - Gloria Bawol
13 - Jeff Kotelnicki	16 - Michael Szydowski
13 - Scott Wechselberger	17 - Judy Zaczek
22 - Jordan Hill	22 - Rody Yezman
<b>ANNIVERSARY</b>	23 - Lucy Wechselberger
18 - Jill/John Carr	24 - Craig Markiewicz
18 - Darise/Walt McGee	27 - Thabit Dauo
	<b>ANNIVERSARY</b>
	14 - Lucy/Don Wechselberger
	20 - Marianne/Craig Markiewicz

May 2024

## ALTAR SERVERS!!!!



Are you interested in serving at the altar during Mass? We're excited to announce that our altar server development classes will be commencing in May! This is a wonderful opportunity to deepen your involvement in the church community and play an active role in our worship services.

During these classes, you'll learn about the significance of the various rituals and duties involved in serving at the altar. Whether it's assisting the priest during the liturgy, carrying the cross, or helping with the preparation of the Eucharist, you'll gain a deeper understanding of the sacred traditions that enrich our faith.

If you're interested in participating, we encourage you to reach out to **Father Jim or Olivia** for more information. They'll be happy to provide you with details about the schedule, expectations, and how you can get involved.

Join us in this meaningful journey of service and spiritual growth as we come together to celebrate our faith and serve our community.

**Interested in submitting a recipe or article for the next publication--or have pictures, or events to share see Father Jim**



## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Young Men's Society of Resurrection National Men's' Retreat

### IRON SHARPENS IRON

*"Iron Sharpens Iron, as one person sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17*

<https://sites.google.com/view/ymsofrmensretreat/home>

This presents a remarkable opportunity for a retreat to deepen our connection with the Spirit of the Lord. Set amidst picturesque surroundings, it offers abundant food, insightful speakers, ample time for reflection and contemplation, opportunities for fellowship, the creation of lasting memories, and significant spiritual growth. Additionally, arrangements for carpooling are available, with the added convenience of a newly installed carpooling system, allowing us to partake in the meaningful experience of raising the cross together. The comprehensive package includes accommodation, all meals, and necessary materials, all for the reasonable price of \$150.00.

The upcoming Men's Spiritual Retreat, scheduled from June 12th to 15th, promises to be a transformative experience, highlighted by keynote speaker Retired SSG Earl Granville of the Army National Guard. Don't miss this opportunity to participate in a gathering aimed at spiritual growth and renewal. Secure your spot for the retreat by signing up here: <https://sites.google.com/view/ymsofrmensretreat/home>



May 2024



### Schedule of Events

#### **Friday, May 24th**

Spins Bowl Independence, 5619 Brecksville Road, Independence, OH  
 11:00am Bowling Check in  
 12:00pm Noon Doubles and Singles Events

The Holiday Inn 6001 Rockside Rd., Independence, OH, 44131  
 6:00-10:30pm Hospitality Room for Fellowship, Food and Fun.

#### **Saturday, May 25th**

9:00 am Check In  
 10:00 am Team Event - Teams of 4  
 1:00 pm Children's Bowling

Pokrova Banquet Hall, 6812 Broadview Rd, Cleveland, OH, 44134  
 6:00-6:30pm Cocktail  
 6:00-11:00pm Awards Banquet with Dinner, and Dancing.

#### **Sunday, May 26th**

**St. Mary's Parish, 5375 Broadview Road, Parma, OH, 44134**

*Celebrant: The Most Reverend Anthony Mikovsky*

**9:00am Holy Mass**

**Breakfast to follow the conclusion of Holy Mass**

The bowling tournament and banquet/dance are an excellent opportunity to reconnect with friends from across the church community, spanning the dioceses of the Eastern, Central, Western, Buffalo – Pittsburgh, as well as representatives from the National Church and the PNA. The event holds a significant place in the church's modern history, being one of the longest-running events, hosted in various locations throughout the United States. And for those who may not be enthusiastic about bowling or unable to participate, fear not! You can still enjoy a weekend getaway in the Greater Cleveland area, partaking in the lively atmosphere during happy hour each evening, and joining in the festivities at the banquet and dance.

**BOWLING BOWLING BOWLING BOWLING BOWLING**

**BOWLING BOWLING BOWLING BOWLING**

**BOWLING BOWLING BOWLING**

**BOWLING BOWLING**

**BOWLING**

<https://www.ymsr Bowl.org/2024/03/77th-annual-tournament-invitation-and-forms/>

May 2024

## UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES



Join us for an exciting **Trivia Night on June 7th!** Doors open at 6:00 PM, and the trivia competition kicks off promptly at 7:00 PM. It's bound to be a fantastic time, with All Saints providing soft drinks for everyone. Feel free to bring along your favorite beverages to enjoy as well. Team captains and table hosts will generously provide snacks and food. Gather your friends and form a team for a fun-filled evening of trivia! For additional details, please contact Pat @ 586.707.7740

Join us on **May 4th** for a day of outdoor activities and community camaraderie! From 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM, we'll be spreading mulch, raking leaves, organizing various areas, planting flowers, and even tackling a bit of tree chopping. Let's work together to beautify our surroundings while enjoying laughter and good company. Safety is our priority, so let's ensure there are no injuries as we work and have fun. Afterward, we'll gather for a delightful meal for all participants. Don't miss out on this opportunity to make a difference and share in the joy of community spirit!



**OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD:** Start collecting & dropping off your items for Christmas 2024. For more information, please contact Olivia.

The **2024 CLERGY RETREAT AND MEETING** is fast approaching, and I am pleased to inform you that Father Jim, who serves as secretary for the Clergy Circle, will be in attendance from May 13th to 15th at the Joseph and Mary Retreat House in Mundelein, Illinois. During this significant gathering, please keep the clergy of the Western Diocese in your thoughts and prayers. Your support during this time is deeply appreciated. Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky will also be in attendance, adding his wisdom and guidance to our proceedings.

**Acknowledgment of LECTOR LEADERSHIP:** We express our genuine gratitude to our lectors, who undertake a substantial leadership responsibility by fulfilling the roles of worship and service leaders in the absence of Father Jim on Sundays, while he attends to his commitments within the Polish National Catholic Church.

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## CALENDAR of LITURGY

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May 3: Crowning of the Blessed Mother Mary preceding Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary

May 5: Holy Mass at 10:00 am with Special Collection for Missions and remembrance of the Martyrdom of Bishop Joseph Padewski

May 10: Marian Devotions including Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament, procession, and Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary

May 12: Holy Mass at 10:00 am during which we will offer special remembrance, prayers, and acknowledgement of all mothers and all women who serve in a special motherly role. This Mass serves

MAY 2024						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

May 2024

as an opportunity for us to honor and recognize the profound love, sacrifices, and nurturing spirit of mothers everywhere. We invite you to join us in celebrating the invaluable role that mothers play in our lives and communities.

May 17: Marian Devotions including Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament, procession, and Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary

May 19: Solemnity of Pentecost Holy Mass at 10:00 am. Pentecost, known as the birthday of the Church, is a joyous occasion where we commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. As such, we **encourage everyone to wear red to Mass**, symbolizing the flames of the Holy Spirit and the fervent zeal of the faithful. Your presence at this special Mass as we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the Christian Church would be appreciated.

May 26: Solemnity of the Holy Trinity, Leadership Team offering service and worship.

## Crowning of St. Mary

May 3, 2024 @ 7:00 pm

The May Crowning and Devotion to Our Blessed Mother Mary hold a special significance in our Catholic tradition. Mary's multifaceted identity, adorned with numerous names, titles, and feast days, reflects her profound role as the Mother of God and our celestial mother. She is revered as the guiding star of the Saints and the epitome of beauty, likened to the most exquisite rose in any garden.



Devotion to Mary traces its roots back to the earliest days of the Catholic Church, with special devotions honoring her celebrated across the globe.

This liturgy entails a procession, hymns, devotional prayers, and the crowning of a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary with a wreath. Through this ceremony, we acknowledge Mary's esteemed titles as Queen of Heaven, Earth, and Peace. It is a poignant and visually stunning tradition that touches the hearts of all who witness it.

## ALTAR SERVER WORD SEARCH

Hands	towel	Wine
Cross	chalice	Altar
Kneel	Jesus	Stole
Fold	pulpit	Bells
water	bells	Bow
cassock		

J D R M H S G H E K E E M I D  
 E Z K M T H A C W G N L R V H  
 S N E O W N I J A T R E B D I  
 U W L B D L O B A F I G E C S  
 S E L S A T G G O Y S P I L U  
 G C H H A U B Y B W Y N L K K  
 R A C B E L L S X V P K T U P  
 I S R S K L H T R S D L O F P  
 S S O S K O T K N Z Z N T C R  
 M O I O A L T A R S A G V E R  
 K C G R H A V E G L U A T X P  
 F K E C R N S W A L B A O W A  
 M G J N I T R C H E W J M L W  
 Y I F U I Z J N S B A C W F F  
 L E W O T W B M P C J I Z Q A

May 2024

## Broccoli-Cheese Casserole Recipe

**Prep Time:** 15 minutes.

**Cooking Time:** 45 minutes.

**Servings:** eight

Whip up this broccoli cheese casserole recipe with just your kitchen basics! It's like a culinary magic trick for those busy weeknights, guaranteed to wow your dinner crowd!

### Ingredients

- ✓ 1 (10.5 ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- ✓ 1 cup mayonnaise
- ✓ 1 large egg, beaten.
- ✓ ¼ cup chopped onion
- ✓ 3 (10 ounce) packages frozen chopped broccoli
- ✓ 8 ounces shredded sharp Cheddar cheese.
- ✓ salt and pepper to taste.
- ✓ 1 dash paprika



### How to Make Broccoli Cheese Casserole

1. Gather all ingredients.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Butter a 9x13-inch baking dish.
3. Whisk condensed soup, mayonnaise, egg, and onions together in a medium mixing bowl until combined.
4. Place frozen broccoli into a large mixing bowl and break it up if necessary; add soup mixture and mix well to coat. Sprinkle with cheese and mix well; spread mixture into the prepared baking dish. Season with salt, pepper, and paprika.
5. Bake in the preheated oven until cheese has melted and the casserole is golden brown on top, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Consider adding chicken

An elderly woman walked into the local country church. The friendly usher greeted her at the door and helped her up the flight of steps. "Where would you like to sit?" he asked politely. "The front row please," she answered. "You really don't want to do that," the usher said. "The pastor is really boring." "Do you happen to know who I am? I'm the pastor's mother," she declared indignantly. "Do you know who I am?" the usher asked. "No," she said. "Good," he answered.

## The Good Shepherd Homily

*Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;*

*and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.*

*I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father."*

**John 10: 11 - 18**

This excerpt from St. John's Gospel, often referred to as the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, illustrates

May 2024

the response of the sheep to the Good Shepherd and imparts lessons about the qualities of effective leadership. These qualities are applicable to individuals in positions of authority, including parents, educators, community leaders, and spiritual figures. Reflecting on these passages allows us to acknowledge and appreciate the presence of exemplary leaders in our lives while also prompting introspection regarding our own leadership abilities.

To fully comprehend the significance of this passage, it is vital to consider the preceding chapter: Chapter 9 of the Gospel of John. Here, we witness a dialogue between the Jewish leaders, specifically the scribes and Pharisees, and a man born blind who has been miraculously healed by Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees are depicted as leaders who hold themselves in high esteem and exhibit harsh criticism. Their dismissive attitude and lack of compassion stand in stark contrast to the qualities of the Good Shepherd portrayed in the subsequent chapter, offering a compelling juxtaposition for reflection.

Chapter ten outlines the type of leadership expected from followers of Jesus, applicable to various roles such as parents, educators, community leaders, and spiritual guides:

1. True leadership, exemplified by the Good Shepherd, is rooted in a deep connection and mutual understanding between the leader and those they lead. Followers obey not out of coercion but out of trust and affection, nurtured by the leader's visible love and selflessness. The shepherd's willingness to sacrifice instills a sense of security and fosters a close bond built on compassion.
2. A good shepherd trusts in the loyalty of their followers, enabling them to lead with confidence and freedom. This mutual loyalty and trust strengthen the relationship between the shepherd and the followers.
3. Good shepherds derive their security from their relationship with God, finding strength in their connection with the divine. This relationship informs their leadership,

guiding them to prioritize values such as love, honesty, trust, compassion, and reconciliation. However, too often, leaders exhibit traits like those of the scribes and Pharisees depicted in Chapter Nine of John's Gospel, lacking compassion and humility.

Today's Gospel encourages us to express gratitude to God for the exceptional leaders we have encountered, both within the church and in public life. These leaders exemplify the virtues of the Good Shepherd and leave behind a legacy of selfless devotion and deep spiritual connection. Let us also recognize the everyday heroes among us, such as parents, godparents, teachers, and community leaders, who guide us with love and care.

Furthermore, we are called to examine our own lives and assess whether we embody the qualities of a Good Shepherd. May our communion with God through the Eucharist empower us to fulfill our role as good shepherds, nurturing those in our care with generosity and selflessness, and always remembering that we are mere instruments of the ultimate Shepherd, God the Father.

## **SERMON: Peace be with you.**

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."*

*Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."*

*Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors*



May 2024

*were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you. Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."*

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.*

### **John 20:19-31**

A week ago, we celebrated the resurrection, a profound experience that deeply impacted me. Despite the exhaustion from Holy Week, every moment spent in communion with both you and Jesus Christ was cherished. I am grateful for the opportunity to share this experience with you, and I hope you also felt blessed.

As we stand here today, a week later, it is time for us to integrate the resurrection into our daily lives. However, this task is not always straightforward. There are moments when the temptation to retreat from life's challenges becomes overwhelming. It is enticing to shut ourselves off from the world, seeking refuge within the confines of our homes and minds. Sometimes, the desire to escape reality prevails.

Yet, by closing ourselves off, we inadvertently create barriers that confine us. Each person, event, or idea we shut out becomes a barrier that restricts our growth. This mirrors the situation faced by the disciples in the Gospel narrative. Despite witnessing the resurrection firsthand, they remained locked in fear behind closed doors, stagnant in their surroundings.

In contrast, Jesus' empty tomb symbolizes liberation, while the disciples' closed-off dwelling represents self-imposed confinement. They have distanced themselves from the reality of Christ's resurrection, succumbing to fear and doubt instead of embracing hope and love.

This pattern is not uncommon. Even a week after Easter, we must reflect: Have our lives been transformed? Do we live in the freedom and joy of the resurrection, or do we remain behind closed doors? What barriers hinder our progress, whether they are fear, doubt, or sorrow?

When the Apostle John speaks of houses, doors, and locks, he goes beyond physical structures to address the internal barriers within the disciples. These barriers, whether they manifest as fear, doubt, or resentment, prevent us from fully embracing the resurrected life offered by Christ.

Yet, Jesus consistently enters these closed-off spaces, bringing renewal and peace. His unexpected presence disrupts our solitude, offering revitalization in seemingly hopeless situations. Amidst our struggles, he declares, "Peace be with you," infusing life into our existence.

Indeed, the reality of resurrection life and peace transcends our circumstances. While challenges persist, Jesus provides the strength to overcome them. His peace sustains us, empowering us to embrace his abundant life.

Let us, as members of the Catholic community, as National Catholics, as the faithful of All Saints, come together to unlock the doors of our lives. Let us step out into the regenerative life offered by Christ, embracing his peace and vitality. "Peace be with you."

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## **SERMON:**

### **"Have you anything to eat?"**

*The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of bread. While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I*

May 2024

*have." And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them. He said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."*

**Luke**

**24:35-48**

In the Gospel passage from the Book of Luke, Jesus poses several inquiries:

- "Why are you troubled?"
- "Why do questions arise in your hearts?"
- "Have you anything to eat?"

Following His resurrection, Jesus encounters two disciples on the road to Emmaus, although they do not recognize Him at first. Similarly, upon entering a room with locked doors on consecutive weeks, He greets His disciples with the words, "Peace be with you." This echoes His ministry before His crucifixion, marked by the practice of asking questions. From an outreach perspective, we aim to focus on spreading the Gospel and inviting others into our parish community.

Why does Jesus employ a questioning approach? Could it be that effective communication involves asking insightful questions? If so, how can we develop the skill of asking meaningful questions?

To explore the significance of Jesus' questioning and whether it warrants emulation, I undertook the task of identifying and cataloging all the questions posed by Jesus in the Bible, totaling 305 in number.

Let us glean insights from the Master Evangelist, Jesus Christ, regarding His approach to outreach, hospitality, admonition, forgiveness, and dissemination of the Good News. One aspect of His

methodology involves reflecting on the questions He posed.

While the instinct may be to provide answers, which certainly hold value, fostering spiritual growth and establishing a relational foundation often begin with asking thoughtful questions.

But why prioritize questions? Shouldn't our aim be to offer solutions?

Exceptional educators understand that while providing answers is important, asking insightful questions cultivates deeper engagement and critical thinking. By probing beneath the surface of routine assumptions, profound questions compel us to confront life's complexities.

An exemplary question serves as a catalyst for genuine inquiry into fundamental concepts, spurring profound reflection, lively discourse, and ongoing reevaluation of core beliefs. It prompts individuals to draw connections with individual experiences and encourages sustained contemplation of significant ideas.

How can we apply the questioning technique employed by Jesus in our own outreach efforts? Questions possess the capacity to till the soil of the human heart, preparing it to receive the seeds of the Gospel.

In the Gospel of John and Luke, Jesus' inquiries along the road to Emmaus exemplify this approach. He initiates dialogue by asking, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" This simple yet profound question remains relevant today, inviting individuals to reflect on their priorities and concerns.

By embracing a posture of curiosity reminiscent of a child's, we can approach interactions with openness and receptivity. Jesus' penchant for open-ended questions, devoid of simplistic "yes" or "no" answers, challenges individuals to delve deeper into their thoughts and beliefs.

Moreover, Jesus' questioning style often presented challenges, prompting individuals to reevaluate their assumptions and perspectives. Notably, He

avoided "when" questions, which tend to focus on temporal concerns rather than deeper spiritual matters.

As we partake in the Eucharistic feast, let us emulate Jesus' example by engaging in meaningful dialogue with others, fostering an environment where questions serve as catalysts for spiritual growth and exploration. As we extend invitations to others, let us approach evangelization with courage and compassion, drawing near to those who may be journeying away from God, and inviting them to explore the transformative power of the Gospel message.

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## SERMON

**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower."**

In the Old Testament, Israel is frequently symbolized as a vine, reflecting its significance within Jewish imagery. This metaphor appears in various passages such as Psalms 80:8-16, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21, Ezekiel 15:1-8 and 17:5-10, and Hosea 10:1. Prophet Isaiah vividly depicts Israel as "the vineyard of the Lord" (Isaiah 5:1-7), while Jeremiah conveys God's message of planting Israel as a choice vine (Jeremiah 2:21). Hosea similarly describes Israel as a prosperous vine (Hosea 10:1). Despite its symbolic prominence, the vine in the Old Testament consistently signifies degeneration and unfaithfulness, warranting severe retribution from Yahweh. This is underscored by Ezekiel's decree that the vine should be burned (Ezekiel 15).

Jesus appropriates the vine imagery, asserting Himself as the true vine in contrast to Israel's degenerate state. He presents a unique claim, declaring that He is the authentic Vine, with His disciples as the living and fruit-bearing branches. Jesus elucidates this analogy, delineating God the Father as the Vine-grower (John 15:1), Himself as the Vine (John 15:5), His disciples as branches (John 15:5) and emphasizing the futility of branches

May 2024

disconnected from Him (John 15:6). Christ represents the genuine Vine, succeeding the old vine of the chosen people with the new Vine, symbolizing the Church as the Mystical Body under Christ's leadership (1 Corinthians 3:9). Fruitfulness, therefore, necessitates adherence to the true Vine, Christ, and embodying his life of grace, enabling believers to yield eternal fruits. This imagery further elucidates the unity of the Church, as articulated by Saint Paul, wherein believers are intimately linked to Christ as members of his Mystical Body (1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:15-16).

Remaining attached to Jesus is depicted as essential for fertility, akin to branches drawing sustenance from the main vine. Jesus emphasizes the imperative of abiding in him to bear fruit, stressing the inseparability of this union. This entails experiencing God's presence through living in accordance with his teachings and actively participating in the spiritual nourishment provided by the Church, chiefly through the Liturgy. Failure to remain in Jesus leads to spiritual withering, analogous to branches detached from the vine. The Holy Spirit plays a pivotal role in nurturing believers, guiding them in love and adherence to Christ's teachings.

Maintaining this connection involves not merely being with Jesus but embodying His essence in

one's interactions. Saint Paul's assertion that "Christ lives within me" underscores this transformative union (Galatians 2:20). Attachment to Jesus transcends mere religious rituals; it entails detachment from worldly desires and embodying Christ's compassion and service to others. Prayer serves as the conduit for sustaining this union with Jesus, indispensable for spiritual vitality.

The Gospels provide a blueprint for discipleship, advocating personal and liturgical prayers, regular participation in the sacraments, meditative scripture reading, and acts of kindness and forgiveness as manifestations of God's grace at work within believers, fostering their connection to Jesus, the true Vine.

May 2024

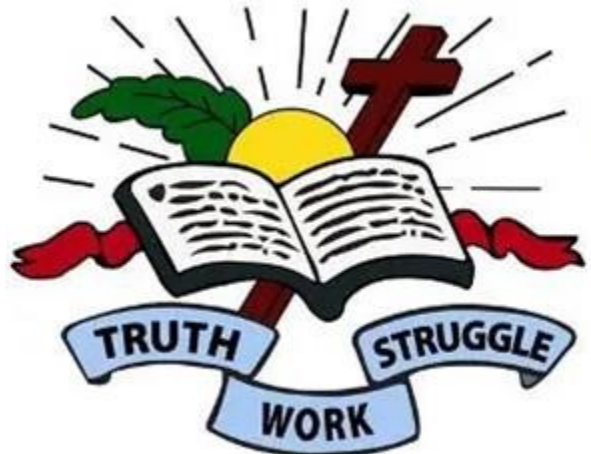
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To:



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