

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
5th Sunday of the Easter Season
2021—B Cycle



Image courtesy of [Emmanuel Phaeton](#)
via [unsplash.com](#)

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Prayer for the Vineyard

by Anne M. Osdieck

The branches move and live and
have their being—in the vine.
The prayer of the spindly branches
is one with the prayer of the anchor vine.
Abba (Father) listens to the beseeching of the vine.

Lord, you tell me to ask for whatever I want
and it will be done for me.

I want:

no greed . . . no hunger . . . no violence . . .
no prejudice . . . no pandemics . . . no global warming . . .
no suffering children . . . no suffering immigrants.
Abba, please hear my prayer.

I want to learn to love.
Abba, please hear my prayer.
I want to learn to love.

Source: [St. Louis University](#)

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Fifth Sunday of Easter Season Readings

5th Sunday of Easter

Acts 9: 26-31 “When Saul (of Tarsus) came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples but they were all afraid of him.”

Psalm 22: 26-28, 30-32 “Let the coming generation be told of the Lord that they may proclaim to a people yet to be born the justice he has known.”

1 John 3: 18-24 “Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.”

John 15: 1-8 “Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.”

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (9: 26-31)



Image Found on [Daily Prayer](#)
from [Jesuit Communications](#)
Richmond, Australia

“When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples there, but they were afraid of him, because they could not believe he was a [true] disciple.

“But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He recounted to them, how Saul had seen the Lord on his way, and the words the Lord had spoken to him. He told them, also, how Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

“Then Saul began to live with them. He moved about freely in Jerusalem and preached openly, in the name of the Lord. He also spoke to the Hellenists* and argued with them. But they wanted to kill him. When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.**

“Meanwhile, the Church had peace. It was building up throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, with eyes turned to the Lord, and filled with comfort from the Holy Spirit.”

** These were foreign-born, Greek-speaking Jews, who returned to settle in Jerusalem.*

*** The [city](#) where, according to the Acts of the Apostles, Saul was born. He was "brought up" in Jerusalem. In [Acts 21: 39](#) and [Acts 22: 25-29](#), we learn that Saul was a Roman citizen by birth.*

Personal Reflection

Paul is already going his own way, but he does not separate from the Mother Church. We see this in his post-conversion journey back to Jerusalem. He goes there to connect with the original apostles. Yet, he preserves his independence and waits for the promptings of the Holy Spirit to guide his ministry to the Gentiles. Later in his missionary ministry, Paul takes up collections from the gentile churches to support needy Christians in Jerusalem.

“When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples there, but they were afraid of him, because they could not believe he was a disciple.”

— *When have I had difficulty breaking into a new group, whether parish, social, civic, or even a spouse’s family? How did it feel to be the “outsider”? How did I eventually gain acceptance? What hard feelings do I nurse because of a rejection? If I still nurse those feelings, the question is, “Why won’t I let go?”*

— *When have I felt wary of a newcomer to my family (e.g., a son’s or daughter’s girlfriend/boyfriend/spouse)? My social group? Or other community? What did I do to make that person feel accepted? Or not accepted? Or it might be a new hire at my place of employment?*

“Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.”

— *For whom have I played the ‘Barnabas’ role by helping my parish or social group to accept a newcomer? How did it work out?*

Responsorial Psalm 22 (26-28, 30-32)

The suffering servant wins deliverance of the nation.

*I will praise you, Lord,
in the assembly of your people.*



*Man at Prayer, photo courtesy of
[Zack Durant](https://unsplash.com/photos/Zack-Durant) on unsplash.com*

I will praise you in the great assembly,
fulfill my vows before all who revere you.

The lowly will eat and be satisfied.

Those who seek Yahweh will praise him.

May your hearts live forever!

*I will praise you, Lord,
in the assembly of your people.*

The whole earth will acknowledge and turn to Yahweh;
the families of nations will worship him.

For dominion belongs to Yahweh
and he reigns over the nations.

Before him, all those who rest in the earth will bow down,

all who go down to the dust.
*I will praise you, Lord,
in the assembly of your people.*

My soul will live for him.
My descendants will serve him
and proclaim Yahweh to coming generations.
They will announce his salvation to a people yet unborn,
“These are the things that he has done.
*I will praise you, Lord,
in the assembly of your people.*”

Personal Reflection

The dying Jesus cried out the first dreadful line of Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” His mind must also have gone to the psalm’s triumphal ending, knowing this day of desertion led to the light beyond it. Christ does not suffer alone; nor does he receive glory alone. To follow Jesus requires us to follow him in the best and worst times of our lives. The key is to suffer in joyful anticipation, as he did.

— *When, during the worst time in my life—now perhaps?—did I rely on my faith in both the passion and resurrection of Christ to maintain my mental and spiritual balance (“sanity”)? What were the circumstances? How did I “survive” and move on?”*

— *Since that “worst” time, what graces/benefits have grown out of that experience to center and strengthen me?*

A Reading from First Letter of St. John (3: 18-24)



Image courtesy of [Jon Tyson](#)
on [unsplash.com](#)

“My dear children, let us love, not only with words and with our lips, but in truth and in deed. Then, we shall know we are of the truth and thus calm our conscience in God’s presence. Every time it reproaches us, let us say: ‘God is greater than my conscience, and knows everything.’

“When our conscience does not condemn us, dear friends, we may have complete confidence in God. Then, whatever we ask, we shall receive, since we keep his commands and do what pleases him. His command is, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and that, we love one another, as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commands remains in God and God in him. It is by the Spirit God has given us, that we know he lives in us.”

Personal Reflection

The practice of love never weakens us, which can happen if we try to live without love. Loving others transforms us into God’s likeness. We need not fear or distrust

God. Bottom line, John says, God knows and judges us better than we can know and judge ourselves. He does it with a love we sometimes lack. It's useless to wallow in guilt over faults we regret . . . and have repaired. Wallowing in regret can only cause anguish within ourselves. John invites us to turn to God, who knows how to repair fractured lives and make them new again.

"My dear children, let us love, not only with words and with our lips, but in truth and in deed."

— *When has someone said to me, "I love you," but whose actions revealed a dark side of unlove? How did I respond? How do the people closest to me know that my "I love you" affirmations are heartfelt and bankable?*

"It is by the Spirit God has given us that we know he lives in us."

— *How do I experience God's indwelling Spirit? How do I react during those inevitable times when God seems distant or even absent from my life?*

— *What is my "go to place" where I am most likely to find God's nearness again? Is it a physical place? A mental place? A spiritual place?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to John (15: 1-8)



Vine image by [Dan Myers](#) on [unsplash.com](#)

Jesus said, "I am the true vine and my Father is the vine grower. If any of my branches don't bear fruit, I break it off and prune every branch that does bear fruit, that it may bear even more. You are already made clean by the word I have spoken to you. Live in me as I live in you. The branch cannot bear fruit by itself but has to remain part of the vine; so neither can you, if you don't remain in me.

"I am the vine and you are the branches. As long as you remain in me and I in you,

you bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not remain in me is thrown away, as they do with branches, and they wither. Then they are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask whatever you want, and it will be given to you. My Father is glorified when you bear much fruit: it is then that you become my disciples."

Personal Reflection

Before moving on to the reflection questions, watch this 4-minute video, "[The Vine and the Branches](#)," illustrated and narrated by [Steve Thomason](#).

— *What is my favorite image in Thomason's graphic portrayal of the vine metaphor? Why does that image stand out for me? What special meaning does it have for me?*

“My Father is glorified when you bear much fruit: it is then that you become my disciples.”

— *What does it mean to me—in my real-life circumstances—to “bear fruit” in my personal corner of God’s vineyard?*

The Week Ahead

Journaling Prompts

— *Based on this weekend’s Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do regarding . . .*

(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships . . . and

(2) my life as an emissary of the Risen Christ, charged with bringing his values and grace to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

— *Who this week needs to hear from me some expression of love?*

Who needs to receive from me a moment of laughter and personal concern?

Why do I hesitate?

Take some time to write about your experience and feelings about events occurring in your life today and what you see happening in the world.

For Inspirational Listening

Music:

“[I am the Vine](#)” by [John Michael Talbot](#)

Preview of Next Week’s Scriptures

6th Sunday of Easter

Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48 “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.”

Psalm 98: 1-4 “Sing to the Lord a new song.”

I John 4:7-10 “Beloved, let us love one another.”

John 15: 9-17 “As the Father loves me, so I also love you.”

Closing Prayer

(edited for use here)

Prayer (based on John 15)

God of love,

plant me in the soil of your grace.

Nurture me with the strength of Christ,

the vine of everlasting life.

Enlighten me with the wisdom of your Spirit,

which flows through me today and all days.

Abide in me,
that I may abide in you
and live in your love.
In your holy name, I pray.
Amen.

~ Adapted from The Abingdon Worship Annual 2012. Posted on the [Worship Elements](#) page of the [Ministry Matters](#) website.

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

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(follow this link to my spiritual novel, [Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words](#))