

## FR. PETER'S HOMILY - FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

In the Gospel we just heard Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and in him will bear much fruit."

Receiving Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is one of the most important ways by which we "remain" in Jesus and he "remains" in us.

Just as a branch receives nourishment by being connected to the vine, so we receive our spiritual nourishment by being connected to Jesus.

This "connection" began when we were baptized, and – for most of us - has been nurtured within our families.

Through daily prayer, reading the Scriptures, Faith Formation of various kinds, and participating in the Mass, Jesus has hopefully become essential to our life.

As Jesus himself said, "Apart from me you can do nothing."

And it is in and through the Holy Eucharist that Jesus wants to literally remain in us so that, strengthened by his True Presence in our soul, we can become transformed to become more like him. However, personal union with Jesus is not enough.

Like a branch growing from the vine Jesus wants each of us to bear fruit.

St. John puts it quite bluntly in today's second reading: "Children, let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and truth."

In other words, we can't just say that we believe in Jesus, we must put that belief into practice.

And how do we do this?

We've heard it again and again throughout the Easter season: by living according to the commandments and, especially, by loving others as Jesus has loved us.

It is by loving God and loving others that we witness to the presence and power of the Risen Lord in our lives.

What we do here in church every weekend is supposed to make a difference in our lives and the lives of everyone we meet.

When Jesus says that he is the vine and we are the branches, that's another way of describing Christ's Body the Church.

As members of the Church, we are each connected with Jesus, and through him, we are connected with one another.

The Eucharist is our weekly celebration of our remaining in Jesus, his remaining in us, and our remaining united with each other.

We call our celebration of the Eucharist "the Mass."

This name is taken from the Latin form of the dismissal at the end of the Liturgy: "Ite, missa est."

Literally this means: "Go, you are sent."

These words echo those of Jesus at his Ascension: "Go make disciples of all nations."

This is the mission of the Church, to go and make disciples.

Thus, we can say that the purpose of the Eucharist is at least four-fold:

- To give praise and thanks to God.
- To be united with Jesus.
- To be united with each other.
- To be strengthened to go make disciples.

It's like a four-legged table, you need all four to remain standing.