

# Sunday Homily

## 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

2 MAY 2021

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I

“Remain in me.”

### Illustration

Many years ago a newly ordained priest arrived in an inner-city parish to which he had been assigned by his bishop. He was eager to begin work and the parish priest gave him the poorest area of the parish to visit systematically house by house. He had very little money and few possessions, but that didn't matter. He had never been happier in his life. His other duties included acting as chaplain to the parish school, saying daily Mass at the local convent and visiting those who were sick in the large city hospital.

The day came when he received an urgent call from the hospital to attend a dying man. The priest thought the nurse on the telephone had said the dying man was aged seventy. Imagine his shock, when, on pulling aside the curtains surrounding the patient's bed, he discovered that it was in fact a young man of seventeen. The young man was also an orphan and had no friends or family to comfort him as he lay dying.

Furthermore, the young man was in agony and could hardly breathe, let alone speak. Nevertheless, when the priest asked if he would like the sacrament of the sick and Holy Communion, such was the young man's faith that he nodded vigorously. As the priest anointed him and gave him Holy Communion, the young man became totally calm and serene. A few minutes later he died peacefully. He had clearly died in union with Christ. This was the first time the newly ordained priest had been present when someone died.

### Gospel Teaching

Using a metaphor taken from the vineyard, a familiar sight to his listeners, Jesus describes himself to his disciples as the true vine and his Father as the vinedresser. He goes on to speak of them as branches and explains that, provided they remain part of the vine, they will bear much fruit. In other words, they will enable others to enter the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, they will not bear fruit if they are cut off from Christ.

It is, in essence, a simple lesson that can be learnt from the vine, or from any other growing plant. To grow, to flourish, to bear fruit, it is necessary to remain part of the whole. A branch that is connected to the vine will continue to draw life and health from its roots. It will eventually bear the fruit that it was made to bear. A branch that is cut off, on the other hand, can only wither and fade; it will never bear fruit.