**Easter 5 B** **Lectionary Catechesis**

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| Images of vine and branches relate to precious blood spirituality and practice. Remaining and abiding in God spills over into our communion with one another, only brought to perfection in maturing discipleship. Barnabas is an example of this practice. Identifying ourselves with Christ or with our culture (the Hellenist issue in Acts) is problematic in our own culture, too. Who are we grafted on to? |

**FIRST READING: Acts 9, 26-31**

This passage reveals some things about the apostolic community. In the middle of the first persecution, the Church appears to be moving into hiding, because the text remarks on the fact that Paul moves openly among them; remember how suspicious and wary they would have been regarding Paul. Barnabas was perhaps a Greek Cypriot Jew. His presence leads to the observation of the tensions present in the apostolic community reflected in Paul’s first debates with the Hellenists. One can imagine that the topic was membership in this new community of believers/disciples; in some senses we still argue about what real membership means today. The debates were fierce enough that Paul had to be moved for his safety. It is speculative to guess that the other topic of debate was the real identity of Jesus Christ, at those points where this early theology and classical Greek philosophy clashed because they were using two separate vocabularies. Hellenists would have been arguably more secular and more cosmopolitan. Hellenism prevailed as the dominant, overarching culture of the early Roman Empire.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What is it we share about our encounter with Christ?What does this story tell us about how the Church is built up? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | Implicit in the background of this account is the reconciliation between Paul and the apostolic community facilitated by Barnabas. How is reconciliation going in your life? Share.In what way does American culture shape your life more than Christianity? See above about the problem of the Hellenists and apply the dynamic to today. |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Who are you planning to being to the next RCIA program in your parish in the way Barnabas brings Paul?When was the last time you spoke out boldly about the Lord Jesus? Share the story.  |
| **WORSHIP** | What is the Church afraid of today in our culture?In what way do you personally encounter Christ in the Eucharist? |

  **First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 22, 26-27. 28. 30. 31-32**

From the second part of the psalm, the stress here is one faithful commitment to worship, while moving the language into the meaning of mission. The mission shares this worship and discipleship with the nations.

**Ps. 22: CCC 304** The psalm recalls God’s primacy over history, which “educates his people to trust him.”

**Vs. 27: CCC 716** The poor necessarily rely on God’s presence in their lives. Because of their powerlessness, they recognize that it is God who saves them. Humility of heart is the preparation for the divine and holy presence of God in the world. This happens in the work and action of the Holy Spirit.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | What are vows? Who takes them?What does it mean that God hold primacy over human history? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What’s humility about in your life in relation to God?Share the blessings you’ve received from God in your life? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Why does the Church identify parents as the first catechists of their children in faith?Why do you think Biblical faith and religion are universal experiences for all? |
| **WORSHIP** | The responsorial is about communal praise. Why is Christianity never a private and individualized experience in worship?The liturgical gesture of bowing is given to us in this psalm. Relate this to the image in the gospel of the vine and the branches.  |

 **Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: I John 3, 18-24**

Love is the core of the disciple’s life, both “in word and in deed.” This inner coherence of the human person is how we know we belong to God. This interior integrity exists because we have known forgiveness and we have professed our faith. Our faith results in doing what God wills. God’s commandment is this (note that it is in the single so that these two things are understand as inextricably interwoven): loving God and keeping commandments. This unique love, results in a profound abiding or remaining “in” characteristic of the person. The example of Cain, who obeyed commandments to worship but failed to love his brother, is set out in the passage just before this. The following passage shows how to test the spirit of this matrix of obedience and love. It is obviously the last verse that relates this passage to the gospel.

**Vss. 19-24: CCC 2845** Divine forgiveness and love have no limit. Prayer that creates peace are alone acceptable to God. Our ultimate debt is to God, yet we trespass on God’s rule over us in sin.

**Vss. 19-20: CCC 208, 1781** When we recognize the divine presence and reality, we grasp our own smallness in the grand scheme of things. In the section of the CCC on Moral Conscience, we learn that conscience also is what is in us to accept responsibility for our acts. The conscience, when fully formed, judges us in our right and wrong. The conscience moves us to forgiveness. When our own conscience condemn us within, our hearts are reassured before God, who is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

**Vs. 21: CCC 2778** The Spirit’s grace shows us the Lord’s Prayer. Prayer is παρρησια, “straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved.”

**Vs. 22: CCC 2631** Just as with the Mass, the first step of prayer is forgiveness. Asking forgiveness is the first thing to prepare best for the Eucharist.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | Why does God’s forgiveness have no limits? Do we just sin, and depend on God’s mercy? Why not?What is the conscience? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | How have you developed your conscience and disciplined this gift from God?How is your prayer like the CCC description in #2778 above? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | Faith is not a personal or individualized thing to be grasp, but rather by nature communal. When and where do people see faith and love connected in your life?How does the practice of reconciliation enable us to share faith? |
| **WORSHIP** | In what way does communion sustain you personally in abiding in God and God in you? What does the “remaining in” or “abiding in” quality or nature of communion feel like to you? |

 **Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: John 15, 1-8 The Vine and the Branches**

The pre-Passover supper discourse of Jesus shared in John 14-17 brings together the deepest teachings of Jesus in this gospel. The first teaching considers our troubled hearts, the second introduces the Advocacy of the Holy Spirit, the third the vine and branches, the persecutions to come, the role of the Advocate, and finally Jesus’ so-called high priestly prayer. The NABrev language is “remaining” while the linguistic range is closer to “abiding.” The emphasis is on the extreme proximity and intimacy of the relationship, which will be perfected in discipleship and manifest most in heaven, yet to come. Next Sunday’s gospel continues this passage.

**Vss. 1-17: CCC 1108** The Holy Spirit infuses each liturgical action, and the Holy Spirit works best in the Church through the liturgy. The divine communion of God and the human person is effected, sustained, and bearing fruit because of the Holy Spirit.

**Vss. 1-5: CCC 755** The Church is a field, both a vineyard and olive grove, whose roots and branches are Christ or there would be no fruit in the field.

**Vss. 1-4: CCC 1988** As Christ, so we too must die to sin and live in God’s life as branches grafted onto the Father as adopted children.

**Vs. 3: CCC 517** Every stage of the life of Christ points to and produces redemption.

**Vss. 4-5: CCC 787** The vine is the image for the intimacy of Christ and Church. Abiding here in this text and in John 6, the body and blood text, manifest the importance of this communion with Christ.

**Vs. 5: CCC 308, 737, 859, 864, 1694, 2074, 2732** Faith understands God’s divine presence everywhere at work. The creature’s dignity is enhanced by complete alignment to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ unites the Church with His own mission as ministers, servants, ambassadors of God. Success of anyone’s apostolic in any form or level radically depends on union with the Trinity through sacraments and prayer. The disciple imitates, conforms, and unites the self to the will of God. The vine and branches image establishes that without Christ the disciple can do nothing, bear no fruit. We are tempted not to pray by the lure of the world’s priorities in our lives. Real love springs only from the humble heart.

**Vs. 7: CCC 2615** Prayer is not only to be in union with Christ, but affords us the advocacy of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is communion with the Trinity.

**Vs. 8: CCC 737** The mission of Jesus and the Spirit is the Church brought to completion. It is oriented always towards communion. The Spirit prepares the Church, manifests the risen Lord to the Church, and makes present the full mystery of Christ, the Eucharist.

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| **KNOW YOUR****FAITH** | How do images help us to better understand the role and work of the Church?How does our communion enhance our freedom rather than diminish it? |
| **LIVE YOUR****FAITH** | What fruit is your life bearing right now?How do we conform our lives to Christ? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | In what way are you an ambassador for Christ by your life?Share your thoughts on the mission of the Church as fruits of the Spirit.  |
| **WORSHIP** | What is the action of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy?To Whom do you find yourself addressing your prayer? And in what way is your personal prayer infused with the sense of communion?  |

 **Gospel**

**Next Sunday: Easter 6 B: Acts 10, 25-26. 34-35. 44-48; Ps 98; I John 4, 7-10; John 15, 9-17**