

## **Fifth Sunday of Easter**

*Acts 6,1-7; 1 Pet 2,4-9; Jn 14,1-12*

**Jesus Christ, the Risen One, our Companion on the way until the end be with you!**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A few years ago, after heavy rain, a section of road in the countryside collapsed. From a distance it looked perfectly normal. Cars kept driving toward it, unaware that the ground beneath had given way. Thankfully, someone quickly placed a large sign before the broken section:

**“Road Closed – Bridge Out.”**

That sign probably saved lives.

It is frightening to think you are safely on the road — and then discover there is no solid ground beneath you.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus gives us something far more than a warning sign. He does not say, “Be careful, the road is dangerous.” He does not say, “Find your own way.”

He says:

**“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”**

He Himself is the solid ground.

He Himself is the bridge.

He Himself is the safe road home.

Today we gather as living stones, very different from one another — some joyful, some burdened, some strong, some tired. We pause from the noise and uncertainty of the week to stand again on firm foundation.

This Holy Mass is our moment to re-anchor our hearts in Christ, our Cornerstone.

It is our moment to walk again, not guessing the way, but following the One who knows it.

May this Eucharist quiet our fears, strengthen our unity, and help us trust more deeply in Jesus — the Way who leads us to the Father.

## **PENITENTIAL ACT**

Lord Jesus Christ,

You are the Way when we feel lost and uncertain.

Lord, have mercy.

You are the Cornerstone when our lives feel shaken.

Christ, have mercy.

You are the Life that lifts us when our hearts grow weary.

Lord, have mercy.

## **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION**

God our Father,

You build Your Church not from perfect stones,

but from forgiven ones.

Have mercy on us.

Forgive what weakens the bond between us and You.

Repair what is cracked in our hearts.

And lead us safely along the Way that leads to everlasting life. Amen.

## **INVITATION TO THE GLORIA**

Brothers and sisters, let us lift our voices in praise.

We follow the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

We join the angels and all creation in singing God's glory.

Let us celebrate together His love that strengthens, guides, and unites us.

## **COLLECT**

Faithful Father,

Your Son is the Way who leads us to You,

the Truth who frees us, the Life who renews us.

In a world of many voices, keep us anchored in Him.

When we feel uncertain, steady us.

When we feel divided, unite us.

When we feel weak, strengthen us with Your Spirit.

Build us into a living house of faith,

firmly joined to Christ our Cornerstone.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives...

Amen.

## **HOMILY: BUILT ON THE CORNERSTONE, WALKING THE WAY, BECOMING LIVING STONES**

Some years ago, a group of tourists got lost in the bush in northern Australia. Their GPS stopped working. The track faded into scrub. The sun was dropping quickly, and with it, their confidence.

Everyone had an opinion.

“It’s east,” one insisted.

“No, south,” said another.

“Just follow me — I’ve got a good sense of direction.”

They argued until an old Aboriginal ranger appeared. He had lived on that land his whole life. He looked at the sky, touched the soil, studied the trees, and said quietly:

“You don’t need to guess the way. I’ll walk you out.”

They didn’t need better arguments.

They needed someone who knew the land.

That is exactly what Jesus says in today’s Gospel:

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

Not: “I will give you directions.”

Not: “I will hand you a map.”

But: “I am the Way.”

And that is the red thread running through all our readings today:

Christ is the Way.

Christ is the Cornerstone.

And we are called to become living stones built on Him.

### **1. “Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled”**

The Gospel begins with very tender words:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”

We live in troubled times. There is noise everywhere — news, opinions, arguments, predictions. Even in the Church there are changes: fewer priests, merged parishes, shifting responsibilities.

It can feel like a storm.

I once visited an old fisherman after a violent coastal storm had destroyed boats and damaged houses. I asked him, “Were you afraid?”

He smiled and said, “Of course. But I’ve dropped anchor in worse storms.”

That is faith.

Not pretending there is no storm.

But knowing where your anchor lies.

Jesus does not promise calm seas.

He promises Himself.

## **2. “Lord, We Do Not Know the Way”**

Thomas says something very honest:

“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

That is a very human question.

We would love a spiritual GPS:

Turn left in 200 metres.

Avoid suffering.

Arrive at heaven in 3.2 kilometres.

But Jesus does not give directions.

He gives Himself.

“I am the Way.”

The Christian life is not first about rules. It is about relationship.

I remember an elderly woman who once said to me, “Father, I don’t pray beautifully anymore. I just sit and look at Him.”

I asked, “And what does He do?”

She said, “He looks at me.”

That is the Way.

## **3. Christ the Cornerstone**

The second image today is about building.

Scripture calls Christ the “cornerstone.” In ancient buildings, the cornerstone held two walls together. If that stone failed, the whole structure weakened.

Psalm 118 says:

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

Jesus was rejected. Mocked. Crucified. Thrown aside like a useless stone.

But God chose Him.

On Him the Church stands — not on organisation, not on money, not on power — but on Christ.

And we are not just bricks in a wall.

We are “living stones.”

Each one different.

Each one necessary.

I once watched craftsmen restore an old church. They carefully numbered each stone before rebuilding it. If even one was missing, the structure would suffer.

That is the Church.

If one person withdraws, there is a gap.

If one forgives, the wall strengthens.

#### **4. When Stones Hurt — and When They Build**

Stones can build — and stones can wound.

I once heard of two parish ladies who did not speak to each other for twenty years — because of Easter flowers.

One insisted on white lilies.

The other demanded yellow.

Twenty years of silence. Over flowers that lasted a week.

It sounds funny — until we recognise ourselves.

In the Acts of the Apostles, even the early Church had conflict. Greek-speaking widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

No evil intention. Just neglect.

But neglect wounds.

The Apostles did something wise. They did not ignore the complaint. They gathered the community. They prayed. They asked the people to choose seven men “filled with the Spirit and wisdom” to serve.

Notice something beautiful:

Serving food was treated as holy.

They laid hands on these men. They prayed over them.

Because in the Church, practical love is not secondary.

It is essential.

I once knew an elderly widow who baked a cake every week and sent it to someone lonely. She said, “It’s not much. But it tells them they’re remembered.”

That is Church.

That is being a living stone.

## **5. Every Stone Matters**

Cardinal Newman once said:

“I am as important in my place as an archangel in his.”

Not because he was proud. But because he understood: every baptised person has a place.

At Baptism, we were made part of a “royal priesthood.”

Not only priests serve.

All of us do.

Some preach.

Some organise.

Some feed the poor.

Some reconcile families.

Some pray quietly in a chair.

I visited a man in a nursing home who said, “Father, I can’t do anything anymore.”

I said, “Can you offer?”

He looked puzzled.

“Offer your loneliness. Offer your pain. Offer your day.”

The next week he said, “I’m offering everything for my grandchildren.”

He had become a living stone again — not by activity, but by love.

## **6. Do Not Throw the Stone Away**

There is an old Persian story about a man who found a bag of stones at dusk. Bored, he threw them one by one at seabirds just to watch them scatter. When only one stone remained, he slipped it into his pocket.

Later, under lamplight, he examined it.

It was a precious jewel.

He ran back to the shore — but the tide had come in. The rest were gone.

Those stones are like our days.

When we are young, we throw them carelessly:

“Just another Sunday.”

“Just another year.”

“Just another ordinary day.”

But each day is a jewel.

Even today.

Especially today.

## **7. The House That Stands**

Let me end with one final story.

After an earthquake, rescuers searched through the ruins of a collapsed church. Almost everything had fallen — except one section of wall around the altar.

Why?

Because in that part, the stones had been fitted tightly together. Each supported the other.

They held one another up.

That is what Christ calls us to be.

Not perfect stones.

Not identical stones.

But stones joined to the Cornerstone.

Stones supporting one another.

Stones that do not throw away the jewel of today.

Storms will come.

Confusion will come.

Weakness will come.

But if we drop anchor in Him,  
if we walk the Way with Him,  
if we remain united as living stones,  
then the house will stand.

And one day, that Way will lead us fully home —  
to the Father's house with many rooms —  
where no storm can shake us again. Amen.

### **INVITATION TO THE CREDO**

Friends, today we remember who we are and whom we follow.

We are living stones, called to build the Church with Christ as our cornerstone.

Let us profess together the faith of the Church:  
the faith in Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life,  
who brings us to the Father and fills us with His Spirit.

### **PROFESSION OF FAITH (FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION ONLY)**

Good and faithful God,

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord —  
the rejected stone whom You have made the Cornerstone.

We believe He is the Way who walks beside us,  
the Truth who sets us free,  
the Life that no death can destroy.

We believe His Spirit holds us together  
like mortar binding living stones.

Make us a united people.

Send us to those who feel forgotten.

Send us to those who have lost their way.

Send us to those who carry heavy burdens.

Let our words be truthful.

Let our actions be loving.

Let our lives show that Christ is alive.

Strengthen our faith when doubts arise.

Anchor us when storms come.

Make us steady stones in Your house.

For this we thank You,  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Let us offer to the Lord the gifts of bread and wine, signs of  
His presence among us.

May these simple gifts be transformed by His Spirit, just as  
He transforms our lives.

With faith and love, let us pray that they may be acceptable  
to God, the Father almighty

### **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Lord Jesus Christ,

You are the Living Stone,  
rejected yet chosen by God.

In this bread and wine  
You make Yourself present among us.

As these gifts are placed upon the altar,  
place us also in Your hands.

Shape us.

Strengthen us.

Build us together in love.

Make us faithful followers on Your Way,  
today and always. Amen.

### **PREFACE**

Father in heaven,

We thank You and praise You through Jesus Christ.

Through Him You created the world  
and gave it order and purpose.

When humanity lost its way,  
You sent Him to guide us home.

He is the Way that leads to You.

He is the Truth that frees our hearts.

He is the Life stronger than death.

Rejected by many,

He became the Cornerstone of a new people.

Through His Cross and Resurrection

You gather us into one family,

built together in hope.

And so, with angels and saints,

with all the living stones of every age,

we proclaim Your glory:

Holy, Holy, Holy...

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE OUR FATHER**

Gathered as living stones in the house of God,

and following Christ, our Way and our Life,

let us pray with confidence the words He Himself taught

us:

## **EMBOLISM**

Deliver us, O Lord, from all evil,

and keep us safe from every harm, seen and unseen.

Grant us peace in our hearts, in our homes, and in our world, so that we may walk confidently in Your Way.

Strengthen us in Your Truth, that we may see You clearly in all things, and live Your Life, loving as You love, forgiving as You forgive.

May we remain firmly built upon Christ, our Cornerstone, and, guided by Your Holy Spirit,

be living stones of Your holy Church,

bearing witness to Your love and mercy

as we await in joyful hope the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

After His Resurrection,  
Jesus appeared to His disciples and said:  
“Peace be with you.”

This peace is more than a quiet feeling or the absence of fear.

It is the deep strength that comes from being rooted in Christ, our Cornerstone,  
a foundation that will not fail.

It is the bond that unites us as living stones,  
each one different, each one necessary,  
holding one another up in love, patience, and forgiveness.

May the peace of the Risen Lord fill our hearts,  
steady our steps on His Way,  
and guide our words, our actions, and our thoughts.  
May it strengthen our unity, so that, together,  
we may build a community that reflects His love, His mercy, and His life.

You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, who calls us to Himself.

He is the Way that leads us to the Father,  
the Truth that sets us free,  
and the Life that fills our hearts with love.

Let us come, trusting in Him, and receive the gift He gives:  
His very Self, to strengthen and guide us on our journey.

## **MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION**

Lord Jesus,  
You are the living stone, chosen and precious,  
yet rejected by the world.  
You are the Way that leads us, the Truth that frees us, and  
the Life that renews us.

As we have shared in Your Body and Blood,  
may we carry Your presence into our daily lives:  
in patience with those who irritate us,  
in encouragement to those who feel lost,

in forgiveness for those who have hurt us,  
and in love for those who are weak or alone.

Make us living stones in Your Church,  
each one placed where You need us,  
holding one another up in faith, hope, and charity.  
Strengthen us to follow You courageously,  
to walk the path You have already made for us,  
and to share Your life and peace with all we meet. Amen.

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Heavenly Father,  
You have given us Your Son, Jesus Christ,  
and nourished us today with His Body and Blood.  
He remains among us as our Way, our Truth, and our Life.

As we go forth into our daily lives,  
keep our hearts anchored in Your love.  
Where there is division, teach us to build unity.  
Where there is confusion, help us bear witness to Your  
truth. Where there is fear, grant us courage and hope.

May we be living stones in Your holy Church —  
firm in faith, steadfast in love,  
and joined together in Your Spirit,  
until the day You bring us fully into Your eternal home,  
where Christ awaits to welcome us.  
Through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

### **SOLEMN BLESSING**

May Almighty God, our loving Father,  
who calls us to life in Christ,  
strengthen what is weak in us  
and fill our hearts with His peace.

May the Risen Lord, our Cornerstone,  
guide our steps along the Way that leads to life.

May His Holy Spirit hold us firm  
as living stones, joined together in love  
in the house He is building.

And may the Father, ✠ the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
bless you, protect you,  
and bring you safely into His eternal home. Amen.

## Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter

*Acts 14,5-18; John 14,21-26*

### INTRODUCTION

A small child once asked his mother, “Where does God live?” The mother thought for a moment and answered, “God lives in heaven, of course.” But the child was not satisfied. Later that day he said, “If God lives in heaven, how does He come close to us?” The mother smiled and replied, “He comes close by living in the hearts of those who love Him.”

Today’s readings speak about this beautiful mystery of God’s closeness. In the first reading, Paul tells the people that the living God has never been far away. Even when people did not fully recognize Him, God continued to show His goodness through the gifts of creation—rain from heaven, fruitful seasons, and the joy that fills human hearts. These simple blessings remind us that God is constantly caring for His people.

In the Gospel, Jesus reveals something even more profound. He promises that those who love Him and keep

His word will be loved by the Father, and that He will reveal Himself to them. More than that, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God does not remain distant but chooses to dwell within us. Our lives become a place where God’s love is experienced and made visible.

This means that our hearts can become a dwelling place for God. When we listen to Jesus’ word, when we love others as He loves us, and when we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our lives, God truly lives within us. As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us ask the Lord to make our hearts a welcoming home for His presence, so that His love may shine through us in all that we do.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you wish to dwell within us and transform our hearts: Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to love one another as you have loved us, yet we often fail to remain in your word: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you send your Spirit to guide us, yet we sometimes neglect to invite Him to dwell in us: Lord, have mercy.

## PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who longs to make His home in our hearts, fill us with His Spirit, cleanse us of every sin that prevents Him from dwelling in us, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

## COLLECT

O God, who by the resurrection of your Son reveal the depths of your love, grant that we may welcome Him into our hearts and lives. May the Holy Spirit strengthen us to remain in Christ, bearing abundant fruit through acts of love, patience, and service. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## HOMILY

A young man once inherited an old, neglected house from his grandparents. The roof leaked, the walls were cracked, and the garden was overgrown. Yet, he saw potential in it. Over time, with patience and care, he repaired it, cleaned it, and made it a home. He would often say to friends, “It’s

not the house itself that makes a home; it’s what lives in it and how it’s cared for.”

This story reminds me of today’s readings. In the first reading, Paul speaks to a pagan audience about the living God. He points out that God has shown His presence through the good things in life—the rain, the crops, the food that sustains us. Even in the midst of struggle and uncertainty, there is evidence of God’s care. And the greatest gift of all? God’s own Son, Jesus, given to us out of love. Just as the young man made his house a home, Jesus invites us to become living homes for God, temples of the Holy Spirit. He says in the gospel, *“Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”*

This invitation is extraordinary: God and His Son wish to make their home in us. Our lives, our hearts, can become sacred dwelling places for the divine. But how do we nurture that presence? Jesus tells us: through love. Our love for Him is expressed by keeping His word, by living His command to *“love one another as I have loved you.”*

And this love is not solitary; it is enlivened and guided by the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sends in Jesus' name.

As we journey through this Easter season toward Pentecost, the readings increasingly focus on the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the teacher who reminds us of Jesus' words, the presence who makes Christ alive within us, the guide who helps us live according to His love. Like the young man tending his house, we are called to invite the Spirit to dwell in us, to fill our hearts, our thoughts, and our actions. When we pray, "*Come Holy Spirit, fill my heart,*" we are asking God to continue transforming us into a home for His love, a temple where His peace can reign.

So, as we go about our daily lives—at work, at home, in our encounters with others—let us ask ourselves: Do I treat my heart and my life as a home for God? Do I allow the Spirit to guide my actions, to bring Jesus' word to life in me? Every act of love, every moment of patience, every prayer offered in faith is like a brick in that sacred home, a sign that God is indeed dwelling with us.

Let me end with the young man from our story: years later, people would come to visit his house not because of its size or its furniture, but because of the warmth and love they felt the moment they stepped inside. In the same way, when God dwells within us, others can sense His presence through our love, our words, and our deeds. We become living signs of God's love in the world, temples where the Spirit continues to teach, guide, and transform.

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Pray brothers and sisters, that the gifts we bring to the altar may become a dwelling place for God in our hearts, a source of love and transformation, and a sign of His presence among us, and be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

### **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Look with favour, O Lord, upon the gifts we offer in this Easter season. Transform this bread and wine into the body and blood of your Son, that our hearts may become living homes for your Spirit, overflowing with love and care for others. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

You have created us to be your dwelling, to bear your presence in the world, and to reflect your love to all. You sent your Son, Jesus, to show us the way, to make His home in human hearts, and to teach us that those who remain in Him bear lasting fruit.

By His life, death, and resurrection, He transformed our hearts into homes for your Spirit, filling them with love, joy, and peace. Today, as we gather in your name, we celebrate your presence dwelling among us and within us, in every act of care, kindness, and devotion. Your Spirit abides in us, guiding us to nurture our hearts as homes where your love can flourish.

And so, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we praise you, joining our voices to proclaim without end: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

## **INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER**

With hearts open to the Spirit and mindful that God wishes to dwell in us, let us ask the Father in prayer, trusting that He provides all we need to bear the fruit of love:

### **EMBOLISM**

Deliver us, O Lord, we pray, from every evil.

Graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may always remain in your love and keep our hearts as dwelling places for your Spirit. Strengthen us to bear fruit through patience, care, and acts of kindness, bringing your presence to all whom we meet, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Lord Jesus Christ, you promised your peace to those who remain in you. Look upon us with mercy, and fill us with your Spirit. May our hearts, homes, and communities become places where your love dwells, where reconciliation flourishes, and where hope and care abound. Strengthen us to bring your peace into the world, reflecting

your presence in every act of love and service.

You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God, who makes His dwelling in our hearts and fills us with His Spirit. Blessed are those called to this sacred banquet, where we receive the bread of life and are strengthened to bear fruit in love.

### **SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION**

As we receive Christ in this Eucharist, let us reflect on our hearts as homes for God. Each act of patience, love, and prayer is a brick in that dwelling. The Spirit comes to reside in us, guiding us to share Christ's presence with others, just as the young man's care transformed his inherited house into a home of warmth and welcome.

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Gracious God, who feed us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, strengthen us to remain in Christ and bear fruit in love, that our lives may reflect the joy of your presence in the world. Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### **BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look upon you with favour, and give you peace.

Amen.

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

Thanks be to God.

### **TAKE-HOME THOUGHT**

Our hearts are like homes. God wishes to dwell within us. Every prayer, every act of love, every moment of care is a brick in the sacred dwelling of His Spirit. Let us open our hearts fully, remain in Christ, and let His love shine through us to the world.

## Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

*Acts 14:19-28; John 14:27-31*

### INTRODUCTION

A young girl once noticed that her older brother seemed sad and discouraged after a tough day at school. Without saying much, she left a small note on his desk: *“I believe in you. Keep going—you are stronger than you think.”* The next morning, he read the note and felt a little lighter, a little braver. That simple act of encouragement helped him face the day with renewed courage.

In today’s readings, we see the same principle at work on a much greater scale. Paul and Barnabas travelled from town to town, strengthening communities, lifting hearts, and inspiring perseverance in the faith. They understood that encouragement—whether through kind words, shared hope, or prayer—can transform fear and discouragement into courage and confidence.

Jesus does the same for his disciples. In the Gospel, he says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” Even in uncertainty,

his Spirit reassures and strengthens us. His peace is not simply the absence of difficulty, but the presence of God’s love in the midst of challenges. Just as a kind word can restore courage in a child, so too can Christ’s Spirit revive hope in our hearts, enabling us to face life’s trials with steadfast faith.

Today, as we gather for this Eucharist, let us open our hearts to receive that encouragement from Christ. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to fill us with peace, so that we may also bring comfort, hope, and renewed courage to those around us—our families, our communities, and the wider world. In doing so, we participate in God’s ongoing work of lifting hearts and transforming lives through love and care.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you come to put fresh heart into your followers: Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you send the Spirit to comfort and guide us, yet we often allow fear or doubt to paralyse us:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to trust in your peace and love, yet we sometimes cling to our own plans and control:

Lord, have mercy.

### **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION**

May Almighty God, who strengthens and encourages us through His Spirit, forgive our sins, renew our hearts, and grant us the courage to put fresh heart into our own lives and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

### **COLLECT**

O God, who by your Spirit strengthen the hearts of your people and bring peace in the midst of fear, grant that we may receive the encouragement you offer, remain in your love, and bear abundant fruit in our words and deeds.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **HOMILY**

A few years ago, I read about a small town library that was on the verge of closing. The staff were discouraged, volunteers had dwindled, and the community seemed indifferent. One day, a retired teacher spent hours speaking with the staff, encouraging them and reminding them of the difference their work had made in many lives. Gradually the library regained energy; volunteers returned, and it reopened stronger than before. That simple act of encouragement transformed despair into hope.

In today's first reading, we see something similar with Paul and Barnabas. As they travelled through the towns where they had planted churches, they did not simply report successes or criticize failures. Instead, they "put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith." These communities lived in a pagan world and often faced ridicule, indifference, and even persecution. What Paul and Barnabas offered was encouragement—a reminder of God's continuing presence and care.

The Gospel shows Jesus doing the same for his disciples. It is the night before his death, and they are anxious at the thought of his departure. Yet Jesus tells them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” He promises them a peace “the world cannot give” and assures them that he will remain with them through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Even in their fear, Jesus is putting fresh heart into them, reminding them that they are not abandoned. This encouragement is something we all need. At times we feel discouraged in our faith, our relationships, or our service to others. But the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, renews our strength and restores our courage. One of the titles of the Holy Spirit is “Comforter,” and that is exactly what he does—he consoles, refreshes, and revives us. Jesus also teaches us that true love is not possessive. If the disciples truly loved him, they would rejoice in his return to the Father. Real love seeks the good of the other, even when it requires letting go. When we entrust people and situations to God, we open ourselves to his greater plan.

Just as Paul and Barnabas encouraged the early Christians, and Jesus encouraged his disciples, we too are called to put fresh heart into one another. A kind word, a listening ear, a small gesture of support can bring the peace of Christ into someone’s life.

The retired teacher in that library did not solve every problem, but her encouragement rekindled hope and strengthened hearts. That is what Jesus does for us—and what we are called to do for each other. Let us ask today for that “peace the world cannot give,” and let us become instruments of encouragement for a world that often feels weary and afraid.

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts we offer may strengthen our hearts in Christ, renew our courage, and may be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

## **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Lord, accept these gifts we bring and transform them into signs of your love and encouragement. May we, nourished by this Eucharist, remain steadfast in faith, empowered by your Spirit to bring hope and peace to all whom we meet. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

You are the source of all encouragement and hope, guiding your people through times of doubt, fear, and uncertainty. By your Spirit, you strengthen hearts, renew courage, and bring peace where there is despair. You sent your Son, Jesus, to show us the path of love, to assure us of your abiding presence, and to put fresh heart into all who follow Him.

In this Easter season, we rejoice that Christ has risen, that the Spirit is given to us, and that we are called to bear fruit in love, joy, and service. We praise you for the strength

you provide, for the encouragement that sustains us, and for the gift of peace that surpasses all understanding.

And so, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your glory and join our voices in the eternal hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

## **INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER**

Let us pray with hearts renewed by the Spirit, trusting in God's encouragement and peace, and ask the Father for all that we need to live in love and to bear fruit in His service:

## **EMBOLISM**

Deliver us, O Lord, we pray, from every evil, and strengthen our hearts with your Spirit. Graciously grant peace in our days, that we may remain in Christ, encouraged by his word and presence, and bring hope and peace to a world in need, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Lord Jesus, you promise your peace to those who trust in you. Look upon us with mercy and fill our hearts with

courage and hope. May we become instruments of encouragement, spreading your love and peace to all we meet. Strengthen our communities, our families, and our workplaces, so that all may experience your comforting presence. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God, who brings encouragement, peace, and life to all who remain in Him. Blessed are we who are called to this table of love and hope, where Christ strengthens us to bear fruit for God.

**SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION** As we receive Christ, let us remember that the Spirit is given to put fresh heart into our lives. Each act of encouragement, each word of hope, each prayer offered for another becomes a seed of life, transforming our hearts and the world around us.

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Gracious God, who renews and strengthens us through this holy meal, may we carry the encouragement, peace, and love of Christ into our daily lives. Guide us by your

Spirit so that we may inspire hope and bear fruit in every act of service. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look upon you with favour, and give you peace. Amen.

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, strengthened by Christ's Spirit, to encourage and bring hope to the world.

### **TAKE-HOME THOUGHT**

Jesus offers encouragement and peace through His Spirit. As we remain in Him, we are empowered to strengthen others, to bring hope to the weary, and to bear fruit in love. Let us be instruments of His encouragement today.

## Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

*Acts 15,1-6; Jn 15,1-8*

### INTRODUCTION

A gardener once shared how he tended an orchard. Each tree had to be carefully pruned, watered, and supported so that it could bear fruit. Some branches had to be cut back to allow the tree to grow stronger, while others needed extra support to thrive. Over time, with patience and care, the orchard produced a harvest far richer than anyone had expected.

In today's readings, we see a similar principle in our spiritual lives. Jesus calls us to remain in him, the true Vine, so that we may bear lasting fruit. Just as a tree cannot flourish if disconnected from its roots, we cannot bear the fruits of love, patience, and generosity if we are disconnected from Christ. God's Spirit nourishes us, prunes what hinders growth, and strengthens our hearts, guiding us to live in communion with him and with one another.

Every effort we make—our work, our relationships, our acts

of service—can bear lasting fruit when rooted in Christ. Even when we face difficulties, God's Spirit works within us, shaping our hearts, refining our intentions, and helping us grow in holiness. It is in this connection, in remaining in the Vine, that our lives become fruitful, not through our own strength, but through God's life flowing in and through us.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us ask the Lord to deepen our union with him. May the Spirit help us remain connected to the Vine, guiding us in love and generosity, pruning what holds us back, and strengthening us so that our lives may bear fruit that blesses others and glorifies God. Him to prune, guide, and nurture us?

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you are the Vine and we are the branches, yet we often fail to remain in you: Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you give life and fruitfulness, but we sometimes cling to our own strength instead of trusting in your Spirit: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to bear fruit that glorifies God, yet we often fall short in love, patience, and kindness:  
Lord, have mercy.

### **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION**

May Almighty God, who is the source of all life and fruitfulness, free us from sin, unite us more closely to the Vine, and strengthen us by the Spirit to bear fruit that glorifies His name and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

### **COLLECT**

O God, who by your Word and Spirit forms us as branches of the true Vine, grant that we may remain in Christ, nurture the life you have planted within us, and bear the fruits of love, patience, and generosity in our daily lives. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **HOMILY**

When I was preparing for my ordination, it was customary to make a small card with the date and place of the ordination and a Scripture verse that had special meaning. I remember choosing a line from today's Gospel: "Cut off from me you can do nothing." It reminded me that if I were to do any good as a priest, I had to remain deeply united with the Lord. Without him, every effort and plan would bear no lasting fruit.

Today's Gospel teaches the same truth for all of us. Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches." It is a beautiful image of communion. The Lord takes the initiative to live in us, but for his life to flow through us we must remain in him, allowing his word to shape our hearts and actions. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own, neither can we. The fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness—grow in us only when we abide in Christ. Jesus also speaks of pruning. Anyone who tends a garden knows that pruning is necessary for healthy growth. In the same way, God sometimes prunes our lives, helping us let

go of what holds us back so that we may grow stronger and more fruitful. These moments can be painful, but the Lord who remains in us sustains us and leads us into deeper communion with him.

What is striking in the Gospel is how Jesus says, “I am the vine—and you are the branches.” He is not distant from us; he is intimately connected to us. We remain in him through prayer, by keeping his word in our hearts, and by loving others as he has loved us. True fruitfulness is not simply about what we achieve, but about the love that flows through us to others and gives glory to God.

I once visited a small garden where a woman carefully tended a single vine. She told me she had spent years pruning it, cutting away what seemed painful but necessary. Yet the vine produced the sweetest grapes. Smiling, she said, “It is not me who makes them sweet; it is the vine that gives them life.”

So it is with us. Our lives bear fruit only because we remain in the true Vine, Jesus Christ. Let us stay close to him in

prayer and love, trusting that his life within us will bring forth fruit that endures.

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts may be signs of our communion with Christ, the true Vine, and may strengthen us to bear fruit in love, joy, and service, and may our sacrifice be acceptable to God the Father almighty..

### **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Lord, accept these gifts and make them holy. Just as you prune and nurture the branches of the vine, nourish our hearts and minds through this Eucharist, so that we may remain in Christ, bear good fruit, and give glory to your name. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

You are the source of all life and fruitfulness. By your Word, you created the world and set all things in harmony. By your Spirit, you sustain the hearts of your people and call us to remain in Christ, the true Vine, that we might bear the fruits of love, patience, and generosity.

Through your Son, you show us the path of communion, the necessity of abiding in your love, and the strength that comes from remaining in Him. You allow pruning, trials, and guidance so that our lives may flourish according to your plan.

And so, with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we proclaim your glory and join our voices in the eternal hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

## **INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER**

With hearts united to Christ, the true Vine, let us pray to our Father, trusting Him to provide strength, guidance, and the grace to bear fruit that glorifies His name:

## **EMBOLISM**

Deliver us, O Lord, we pray, from every evil, and strengthen our hearts by the Spirit. Graciously grant peace in our days, that we may remain closely united to Christ, the true Vine, and bear fruits of love, patience, and generosity for the good of your Church and the world, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Lord Jesus, you are the Vine, and we are the branches. Look upon us and grant the peace that comes from remaining in your love. Strengthen our hearts to bear good fruit, guide our hands in service, and fill our lives with the Spirit so that we may share encouragement, hope, and love with all whom we meet. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God, who nourishes us with His life and love, that we may remain in Him and bear abundant fruit. Blessed are we who are called to this table of communion, unity, and spiritual growth.

## **SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION**

As we receive Christ, the true Vine, let us reflect on our connection to Him. Each act of love, patience, and encouragement is a fruit of the Spirit, nurtured by our communion with Christ. In Him, our lives can flourish and bring life to those around us.

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Lord God, who nourishes us with the Bread of Life, strengthen us to remain in Christ, your true Vine, and empower us to bear fruit in love, patience, and service to others. May the life we receive today guide our actions and words, glorifying your name in all we do. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look upon you with favour, and give you peace. Amen.

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, strengthened by Christ, the true Vine, to bear fruit in love and service to the world.

## **TAKE-HOME THOUGHT**

Remaining in Christ, the true Vine, gives life, guidance, and strength. Every act of love, patience, and encouragement we perform becomes fruit that glorifies God and strengthens the world around us.

## Thursday, Fifth Week of Easter

*Acts 15,7-21; John 15,9-11*

### INTRODUCTION

A young boy noticed that his classroom seemed gloomy—students were quiet, and few smiled. One day, he began leaving small notes of encouragement on his classmates' desks: *"You can do it!", "I'm glad you're my friend!", "Keep going—you're amazing!"* Gradually, the classroom atmosphere began to change. Students laughed more, helped each other, and worked together with greater joy. That small, consistent effort to spread kindness brought life and happiness to the whole class.

In today's readings, we see a similar principle at work in the life of the Church. Jesus calls us to remain in his love, so that joy may grow in our hearts and in the community around us. God's love is not limited to a select few; it is meant to flow freely, bringing encouragement, openness, and inclusion wherever we go.

Every act of love, patience, and generosity can become a seed of joy, helping others to feel welcomed, supported,

and loved. When we share God's love, even in small ways, we participate in the life of the Spirit and allow Christ's joy to take root in the hearts of those around us.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us ask the Lord to fill us with his love and joy. May the Spirit guide us to remain in Christ, so that our words, actions, and attitudes reflect his presence in the world. In doing so, we become instruments of encouragement, reconciliation, and happiness, spreading the abundant joy that comes from remaining in God's love and allowing it to flow freely to others.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you call us to remain in your love, yet we sometimes resist others and build walls instead of bridges:  
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you invite all people to share in your joy, yet we often hold back love, generosity, and forgiveness:  
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you embrace all, yet we often judge or exclude, failing to see the presence of God in others:  
Lord, have mercy.

## **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION**

May Almighty God, who is rich in mercy, forgive us our sins, open our hearts to the joy of remaining in Christ's love, and strengthen us to welcome others with generosity, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

## **COLLECT**

O God, who have called us to remain in Christ's love, grant that we may rejoice in your presence and share that joy with all whom we meet. May we embrace others without prejudice, open our hearts to your Spirit, and bear the fruits of love, patience, and kindness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **HOMILY**

I once heard the story of a small town church struggling to welcome a new family from a different culture. Some older members hesitated, unsure how the newcomers would fit in. But one young volunteer simply invited the family to join the choir. Slowly, walls came down, friendships formed, and the community began to flourish. That simple

openness became a source of joy for the whole parish. In today's first reading, Peter faces a similar situation in the early Church. Many believers were Jewish, and some insisted that Gentile converts should follow Jewish practices, such as circumcision. But Peter recognizes that God is doing something greater. "God made no distinction between them and us." He reminds the community not to place unnecessary burdens on those whom God is calling. Sometimes the best thing we can do is step aside and allow the Lord to work.

The Gospel echoes this spirit. Jesus tells his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you... remain in my love." He then adds that his purpose is that "my joy may be in you and your joy be complete." Love and joy are deeply connected. Even on the night before his suffering, Jesus speaks of joy—not as a passing emotion, but as the fruit of living in God's love.

This is the joy Jesus offers us: the joy of being deeply loved by God and of sharing that love with others. When we remain in Christ—living his commandment to love one

another—our lives become channels of that joy. It is a joy that can exist even in difficulties because it comes from God’s presence within us.

This also challenges us to overcome divisions and prejudices. Just as God shows no partiality, we too are called to welcome others with openness and generosity. The Church grows when we recognize that God’s Spirit is at work in every person.

I am reminded of a little girl who noticed an elderly neighbour sitting alone each afternoon. She began bringing him flowers and talking with him. Over time, their simple friendship brought laughter and companionship. Her small act of love became a source of great joy for both of them.

In the same way, when we remain in Christ’s love and share it with others, we discover the joy he promises—a joy that transforms not only our own lives but also the lives of those around us. Let us ask the Lord today to help us remain in his love so that his joy may truly be complete in us

## **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these offerings may become a source of joy and love in our lives, strengthening us to remain in Christ’s love and share that love with others, and be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

## **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Receive, O Lord, the gifts we bring. Just as your Son calls us to remain in his love, make this sacrifice a source of joy, unity, and service. May it strengthen our hearts to embrace others, remove barriers of fear or prejudice, and bear abundant fruit in love and generosity.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

You are the source of all love and joy. You call us to remain in Christ, your Son, and to open our hearts to one another. By your Spirit, you enable us to welcome others, break down barriers, and rejoice in your presence. Your Church

is strengthened when we share your love freely, and your kingdom grows when we live in communion with all people.

And so, with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we proclaim your glory and join our voices in the eternal hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

### **INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER**

United in Christ's love and joy, let us confidently pray to our Father, asking for guidance, openness, and the grace to bear fruit in love and service:

### **EMBOLISM**

Deliver us, O Lord, we pray, from every evil and fill our hearts with your Spirit. Graciously grant peace in our days, that we may remain in Christ's love, embracing others, sharing joy, and bearing the fruits of generosity, patience, and kindness, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Lord Jesus, you are the source of true joy and love. Look upon us and grant your peace, that we may remain in your love, share that love with everyone we meet, and build communities of understanding, acceptance, and joy.

Through the Spirit, may we bear fruit in service, generosity, and encouragement. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God, who nourishes us with His love and calls us to remain in Him. Blessed are we who are invited to this table, where joy, love, and communion unite us as one in Christ.

### **SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION**

As we receive the Bread of Life, let us reflect on the joy that comes from remaining in Christ's love. Our acts of openness, encouragement, and generosity become fruit that glorifies God and strengthens the bonds of community around us.

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Lord God, who nourish us with the gift of your Son, strengthen us to remain in Christ's love and bear fruits of joy, generosity, and patience. May the life we receive today guide our actions and words, bringing your presence and joy to the world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look upon you with favour, and give you peace. Amen.

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, rejoicing in Christ's love, and bear fruit in joy, generosity, and service to all you meet.

## **TAKE-HOME THOUGHT**

Remaining in Christ's love brings true joy. Every act of openness, kindness, and encouragement becomes a fruit that strengthens the Church and transforms lives.

## **Friday, Fifth Week of Easter Homily**

*Acts 15,22-31; John 15,12-17*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A schoolteacher once noticed that one of her students seemed withdrawn and discouraged. Each day she made a point of greeting him, praising his work, and listening when he wanted to talk. Over time the boy's confidence grew, he began participating more in class, and his cheerful spirit started to influence others as well. That small but consistent encouragement brought new life not only to him but to the whole classroom.

This story reflects the spirit of today's readings. In the early Church, encouragement, love, and support were lived out in everyday actions. Paul and the other apostles strengthened one another and built communities rooted in faith and friendship.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls us into that same friendship with him—a relationship based on love, not obligation. He has chosen us and invites us to love one another in return. Like the teacher's small acts of care, our simple gestures—a

kind word, a listening ear, a moment of patience—can bring hope to others.

Today, let us ask the Lord to open our hearts so that we may become channels of his love and encouragement, bringing his joy to those we meet.

### **PENITENTIAL ACT:**

Brothers and sisters, let us call to mind our sins and seek the mercy of God, who loves and encourages us:

Lord, you call us to friendship and love; Lord, have mercy.

Christ, you invite us to bear one another's burdens; Christ, have mercy.

Lord, you strengthen and guide us in faith; Lord, have mercy.

### **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION:**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and strengthen us to be faithful friends and witnesses of His love, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

### **COLLECT**

O God, who call us into friendship with your Son, grant that, nourished by the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, we may love one another as Christ has loved us, and be living signs of His presence in our communities.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **HOMILY**

A few years ago, I heard a story about an elderly man who lived alone in a small town. Every morning, he delivered fresh bread to his neighbours, not because he was asked, but simply to bring them joy. When a neighbour asked why, he smiled and said, "I've received so much kindness in my life. I cannot keep it to myself; I must share it." This story beautifully reflects today's readings.

In the first reading, the early Church shows this same spirit of encouragement. The Jerusalem church sends a letter to Antioch, supporting and guiding them. When it was read, the community "were delighted with the encouragement it

gave them.” From the start, followers of Jesus were called to lift each other up. Paul repeatedly urges, “Encourage one another.” Encouragement builds community, strengthens faith, and reflects God’s love.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus takes this to a deeply personal level. At the Last Supper he says, “I do not call you servants any more... I call you friends.” Friendship is freely given, and Jesus chooses us first: “You did not choose me; I chose you.” His love comes first; our love is a response. True friendship involves sharing fully, even to the point of laying down one’s life, as Jesus did and as Maximilian Kolbe exemplified.

Friendship is not one-sided. As Jesus befriends us, we are called to respond by loving and encouraging others. Living out our friendship with Christ means walking with others in joy and in hardship, offering small acts of care and attention.

Consider the young woman who felt lonely until a colleague simply asked how she was, shared a cup of coffee, and listened. That small act of friendship changed

her week, even her life. Likewise, Jesus calls us to be sources of encouragement and love in small but meaningful ways.

Friendship is a gift; encouragement is a ministry; love is the command. Let us receive the friendship Jesus offers, rejoice in it, and go forth to befriend, encourage, and love others as he has loved us.

#### **INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS:**

May our offerings, signs of our friendship and love, become a source of encouragement, unity, and hope, reflecting the love of Christ dwelling in us, and be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

#### **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS:**

Receive, O Lord, these gifts of bread and wine, and grant that, strengthened by the Body and Blood of your Son, we may be faithful friends and ministers of encouragement to one another, bearing witness to your love in the world.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you call us into friendship with your Son, and through Him you make your love present among us. You sent the Holy Spirit to strengthen and console us, to renew our hearts, and to teach us the ways of faithful discipleship.

Through Him, we rejoice in the communion of your Church, in the bonds of friendship and encouragement, and in the fruitfulness of lives lived in love and service. United with angels and saints, we praise you, and join their unending hymn of glory:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

## **INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER:**

With hearts full of gratitude for God's friendship and love, let us pray as Christ our Lord taught us:

## **EMBOLISM:**

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our days. May the Spirit of Christ, dwelling within us, make us instruments of encouragement and love, so that we may live in faith, hope, and unity as we await the blessed hope and coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

## **PRAYER FOR PEACE:**

Lord Jesus, friend of all, who have chosen us and called us to bear one another's burdens, grant that we may be instruments of your peace. Strengthen our hearts to encourage, support, and uplift those who are weary or troubled. Let your Spirit guide our words and deeds, so that your love and peace may flow through us to all we meet. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION:**

Behold the Lamb of God, who comes to draw us into his friendship and love, taking away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to this supper, where we are strengthened to encourage, love, and serve one another in Christ.

### **SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION:**

As we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, let us remember that friendship, encouragement, and love are not just ideals—they are gifts that flow from Christ into us, and through us to others. Let us carry His love into our homes, workplaces, and communities, becoming living witnesses of His presence.

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION:**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for nourishing us with the sacred gifts of your Son. Grant that, strengthened by His Body and Blood, we may grow in love and friendship, and bear abundant fruit in our acts of encouragement and service. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **BLESSING:**

May almighty God bless you, + fill your hearts with the joy of Christ's friendship, and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit to love, encourage, and serve one another.

### **DISMISSAL:**

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your acts of love and friendship.

### **TAKE-HOME THOUGHT:**

Today, let us remember that friendship and encouragement are ministries in themselves. Just as Jesus has befriended us, we are called to lift others up, to be instruments of His love, and to make the world a little brighter with acts of kindness and encouragement.

## **Saturday, Fifth Week of Easter**

*Acts 16,1-10; Jn 15,18-21*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

A young boy once tried to climb a steep hill near his home. At first, he was hesitant, unsure if he could make it. His older sister encouraged him, holding his hand and reminding him to take one careful step at a time. With her guidance and his determination, he reached the top, exhilarated by the view and proud of his courage. That small experience taught him that even when the path seems uncertain or challenging, support, trust, and perseverance can help him overcome fear.

In today's readings, we see the same principle in our spiritual lives. God calls each of us to step into the unknown, to share the Gospel, and to respond with courage even when the world may misunderstand, oppose, or reject us. Paul's vision of the man from Macedonia shows the importance of listening and trusting God's guidance, while Jesus reminds us that following Him may

bring challenges—but it also brings the reward of living faithfully and fruitfully in His love.

Like the boy climbing the hill, our journey of discipleship requires trust, courage, and perseverance. Every act of love, patience, or witness—even in small or hidden ways—becomes a step forward in God's plan. Today, let us open our hearts to the Spirit, asking for strength to follow Christ courageously, and to be living witnesses of His grace and love in every encounter.

### **PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE:**

Brothers and sisters, aware of our need for God's courage and guidance, let us call to mind our sins and ask for His mercy.

- Lord, you call us to follow you courageously; Lord, have mercy.
- Christ, you empower us to love even those who oppose us; Christ, have mercy.
- Lord, you free us from fear and doubt; Lord, have mercy.

## **PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION:**

May almighty God, who calls us to courage and love, have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and strengthen us to follow Christ faithfully, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

## **COLLECT:**

O God, who call us to follow your Son and bear witness to His love even in difficulty, grant that we may respond to your call with courage and faith. Strengthen us through the Spirit to overcome fear and to act with love, that we may be true witnesses of Christ's victory over sin and death. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **HOMILY**

When I was a child, I saw a small bird caught in a net. It struggled frantically until a neighbour gently freed it. Watching it fly away, I felt awe at the courage it showed. That image comes to mind today as we reflect on following Christ.

In today's Gospel, Jesus warns, "If the world hates you, remember it hated me first." A servant is not greater than the master. Following Christ may bring misunderstanding, rejection, or even hatred. Yet Jesus shows us how to respond—not with retaliation, but with love, even for those who betray us.

The first reading shows Paul responding to God's call in a vision: a man from Macedonia pleading, "Come and help us." Paul could have ignored it, but he went, spreading the Gospel to places that had never heard of Christ. Like Paul, our willingness to respond—even in small ways—can bring God's grace to others.

This call to courage continues today. Christians around the world face persecution, yet faith endures. The Marian shrine at Sheshan, Our Lady Help of Christians, reminds us that love and life triumph over hatred. Their courage invites us to witness Christ in our own lives—at home, at work, and in our neighbourhoods.

Like the bird freed from the net, we may face struggles or opposition as we follow God's call. Yet with love, trust, and courage, the Holy Spirit enables us to reflect Christ's love to a world that often resists it.

Today, let us ask ourselves: Are we listening for God's call? Are we ready to follow, even when the path is difficult? May we have the courage to love, serve humbly, and let our lives, freed and guided by God's grace, be a sign of hope and love to the world. Amen.

#### **INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS:**

May these gifts, offered in trust and courage, become for us a source of grace and strength, empowering us to respond faithfully to God's call in our lives, and may they be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

#### **PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS:**

Look with favour, O Lord, upon these gifts, and grant that, nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son, we may receive courage in following Christ and strength to act in love toward others, even in the face of opposition or fear. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you call us to follow your Son, and through Him you pour out the Holy Spirit, giving us courage, wisdom, and strength. You sustain us in trials, guide us through challenges, and invite us to bear witness to your love even when the world opposes us.

Through Him, your love becomes visible in the lives of the faithful, in acts of service, encouragement, and courage. United with angels and saints, we sing the hymn of your glory and proclaim without end:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

#### **INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER:**

With hearts trusting in God's guidance and courage, let us pray as Christ our Lord has taught us:

### **EMBOLISM:**

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us courage and peace. May your Spirit strengthen us to follow your call, to act in love, and to bear witness to Christ in our daily lives, as we await the blessed hope and coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **PRAYER FOR PEACE:**

Lord Jesus, who faced opposition and hostility yet responded in love, grant that we may follow your example. Fill our hearts with courage and trust, so that we may act justly and lovingly even when confronted with fear, misunderstanding, or resistance. Let your Spirit guide our words and actions, bringing your peace to our families, communities, and the world. Amen.

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION:**

Behold the Lamb of God, who calls us to courage, love, and faithful service, and who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to this supper, where we are strengthened to follow Christ and share his life with others.

### **SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION:**

As we receive Christ in the Eucharist, let us remember that courage and love go hand in hand. God calls us to act faithfully, to respond to challenges with patience and love, and to bear witness to His grace in every encounter.

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION:**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for feeding us with the Body and Blood of your Son. May this sacrament strengthen us to follow your call with courage, to love our neighbours as you love us, and to bear witness to your mercy and grace in all we do. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **BLESSING:**

May almighty God bless you, strengthen your hearts with courage and love, and fill you with the Spirit ✠ so that you may follow Christ faithfully and bring his light to the world. Amen.

## **DISMISSAL:**

Go in peace, strengthened by Christ's courage and love, to serve and encourage all whom you meet.

## **TAKE-HOME THOUGHT:**

God calls each of us to courage and love. Even when faced with opposition, misunderstanding, or fear, we can respond with the Spirit's guidance. Like the bird freed from the net, we are invited to soar in freedom, trusting God's grace and reflecting His love in the world.