

Readings for the week of April 28, 2024

Sunday:

Acts 9:26-31/Ps 22:26-27, 28, 30, 31-32
(26a)/1 Jn 3:18-24/Jn 15:1-8

Monday:

Acts 14:5-18/Ps 115:1-2, 3-4, 15-16/
Jn 14:21-26

Tuesday:

Acts 14:19-28/Ps 145:10-11, 12-13ab, 21/
Jn 14:27-31a

Wednesday:

Acts 15:1-6/Ps 122: 1-2, 3-4ab, 4cd-5/
Jn 15:1-8

Thursday:

Acts 15:7-21/Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 10/
Jn 15:9-11

Friday:

1 Cor 15:1-8/Ps 19:2-3, 4-5/Jn 14:6-14

Saturday:

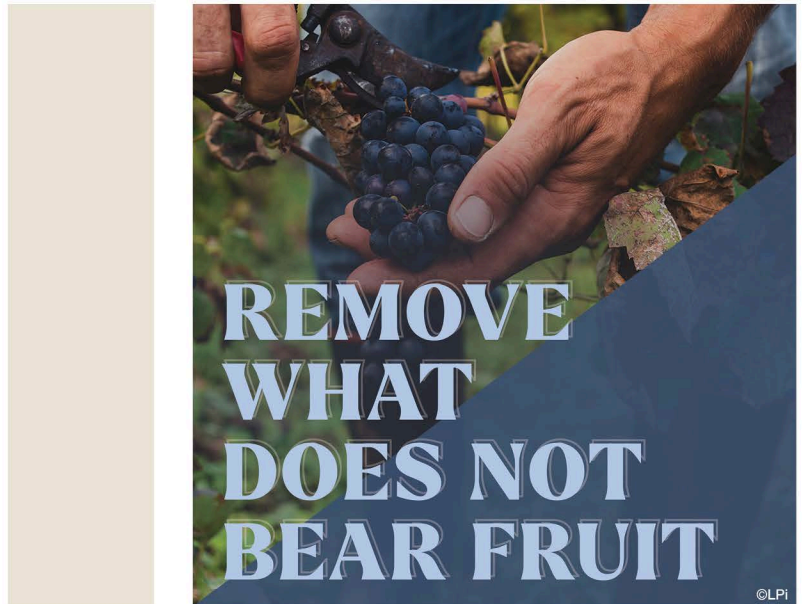
Acts 16:1-10/Ps 100:1b-2, 3, 5/Jn 15:18-21

Next Sunday:

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48/Ps 98:1, 2-3,
3-4 (see 2b)/1 Jn 4:7-10/Jn 15:9-17



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Gospel Meditation

Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

My friend and fellow pastor, Father Paul, noticed unsightly, overgrown trees near his parish church. He asked the maintenance crew to cut back the growth, which they happily did, telling him the trees would be much healthier and even fuller after a good pruning. A few days later, Father Paul received a letter from an irate man in the neighborhood who wrote, “Jesus would never prune trees like that. He loves trees, unlike you.”

I suspect that the neighbor was not familiar with this week’s Gospel in which Jesus says of his Father, **“He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit”** (John 15:2) I don’t mean to pick too much on that fellow. He was perhaps ignorant of arboriculture. But I’d wager his main confusion was the pruning and removing quality of God’s love. That confusion afflicts us all to some degree, doesn’t it? It is just so darn easy to react negatively when God cuts something out of our lives and assume it’s not his work at all. In the moment, all we see is the loss, and not the loving desire for future flourishing.

The cross is the great pruning of Christ’s body. Jesus’ rising is the brand-new growth. It is God’s promise to us that all the painful pruning in life is leading us somewhere beautiful. What has been cut back or out in your life? A friend, an opportunity, a sense of certainty, a job, health, a relationship? This week, offer those dry branches to the one who lovingly prunes us in order to make our lives burst with verdant growth.

— *Father John Muir*

(PRACTICING) CATHOLIC

Love in Deed

It's a Wonderful Life is one of my favorite Christmas movies. It only occurred to me recently, though, that this film, for all its yuletide aesthetic, is actually more of an Easter story.

I love this movie because it's a very Catholic film — not overtly, although we do see the main character, George Bailey, going to Mass. No, it's the themes that are Catholic, not the set dressing. It's a story about the choices we make — to love, or not to love? To sacrifice, or not to sacrifice? To put oneself first, or to put oneself last? It's a story about what the consequences of those choices look like here in the world, and what they look like in heaven.

In the film, we meet a young George Bailey who dreams of growing up to do amazing, impressive things. Over the years, he makes a choice here and he makes a choice there ... and when all is said and done, the adult George Bailey is a tired, overworked husband and father with no worldly attributes that anyone would envy.

But he's a man who has loved in deed, not just in word, and who has reaped the spiritual rewards of those choices.

The season of Easter is about rejoicing in true redemption, not in worldly triumph. The Word of God is not a bedtime story. It's a pruning shear. To hear it is to be changed, to be shaped. To live it is to lose some things, so that you might bloom in unexpected ways. To welcome the Word is to be willing to look different, to feel different.

Anyone can say, "I love you, I accept you, I want to help you." But what does it actually look like, to love in deed and not just in word? It looks like giving something up: free time, wealth, comfort, worldly approval. It looks, to the casual observer, like pain.

To someone who has no concept of how plants grow and thrive, a gardener's pruning shears look like an executioner's sword. To someone who has no concept of how souls grow and thrive, a tomb barred by a stone looks like the end of a story, when in fact it's just the beginning.

"Children, let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and truth." — 1 John 3:18

- Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

Why do we do that? Catholic Life Explained

Question:

How does a person become a canonized saint?

Answer:

It is important to remember that all the saints are people, real people who lived just as we do! The first saints of the Church were martyrs or theologians known for a holy life. Over time, the Church has established a set process to investigate the causes of saints.

After a holy person's death, the bishop of their diocese initiates the canonization process with the Vatican. Typically, they must wait five years to ensure any false enthusiasm has lessened. With Vatican approval, the process begins and the person receives the title "Servant of God." The first phase involves collecting information about the person's life and scrutinizing it carefully. One person has the specific role of raising doubts — this is the origin of the phrase "devil's advocate!" When it is clear the person truly lived a heroically holy life according to Church teaching, they are declared "Venerable."

If the person is a martyr for the faith, they will also be declared "Blessed." If the person is not a martyr, they must be credited with a miracle. This is also closely examined for authenticity. Once the miracle is authenticated as truly a miracle performed by God through the person or through their intercession, they are beatified. An additional authenticated miracle is required before canonization, and we can call them "Saint."

Weekly Prayer

Sunday's Readings

First Reading:

Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles, and he reported to them how he had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken to him. (Acts 9:27)

Psalm:

I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people. (Ps 22)
Or: Alleluia.

Second Reading:

And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. (1 Jn 3:23)

Gospel:

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5)

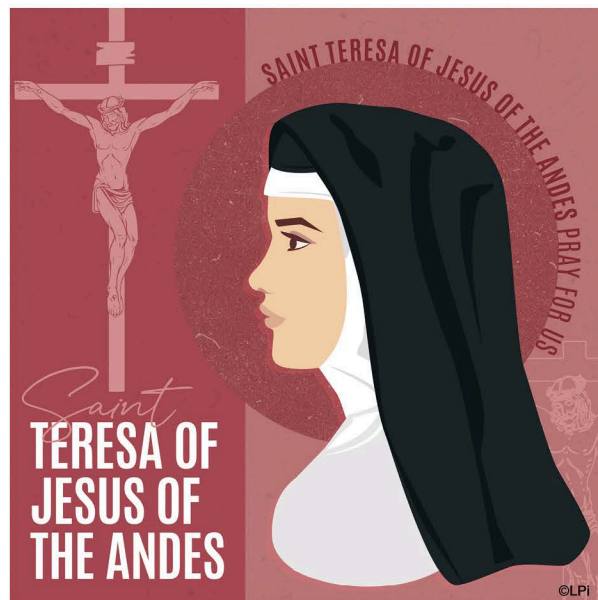
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Live The Liturgy Inspiration of the Week

Every Christian is a vine awaiting the loving attention of our gardener to prune and perfect us, to remove the parts of ourselves that are dead so that the fruitful parts burst forth with life. Trust the wisdom of the gardener. He alone can make us bloom.

Observances for the week of April 28, 2024

- Sunday:** 5th Sunday of Easter
Monday: St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church
Tuesday: St. Pius V, Pope
Wednesday: St. Joseph the Worker
Thursday: St. Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church; National Day of Prayer
Friday: Sts. Philip and James, Apostles
Next Sunday: 6th Sunday of Easter



Saint of the week

St. Teresa of Jesus of the Andes was a teenage Chilean Carmelite novitiate. Although she died of typhoid when she was 19, she proved that one's life doesn't have to be particularly long and filled with lofty accomplishments to be an amazing example of the love of Christ.

Prayer of Fruitfulness

God in Heaven,
Your grace surrounds us every day as we seek to live and move and grow in You. Prune the spaces in our lives that distract us from You! Plant Your word more deeply within us!
Amen.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.” - Jn 15:1-2

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Questions of the Week

Invite Parishioners to Reflect and Respond to Scripture

First Reading:

The disciples were unwilling to trust that Saul (Paul) was a true believer until Barnabas offered support for Saul. How easily do you trust people you don't know well?

Second Reading:

John speaks of the importance of knowing in your heart that you believe in Jesus and truly love others. How does anyone know what is in their heart?

Gospel Reading:

Using the metaphor of a vine and branches, Jesus speaks of the importance of staying connected to him and the Father. When do you feel close to Jesus?



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To speak of the Blessed Sacrament is to speak of what is most sacred.

- ST. EUPHRASIA

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“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.” - Jn 15:4-5

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