

**May 2, 2021**

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

Acts 9:26-31

1 Jn 3:18-24

Jn 15:1-8

**GROW:** Today's readings are at once challenging and reassuring. Challenging, because we are to remain in Christ, by "[keeping] his commandments and [doing] what pleases him"; and reassuring, because we know that the Holy Spirit is with us and we can "have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask." As Jesus says to us, "I am the vine, you are the branches ... without me you can do nothing." Through the Eucharist, the sacraments of the Church, Sacred Scripture, and in belonging to a faith community, God gives us many ways to grow closer to Jesus, and to direct our life toward him. In the pruning of sinful habits from our lives and building us up, through grace, to walk in the fear of the Lord, God transforms our hearts so that we remain in him, and he in us. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to speak out boldly in the name of the Lord.

**GO:** Just as the new life and growth of springtime is already very visible in many parts of the United States, today's first reading describes a kind of springtime in the Church. Even as Saul faced multiple death threats, he continued to boldly proclaim the Good News. "The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers." Today, many Christians around the world face persecution for their beliefs or live in cities or countries where violence, poverty, or hunger threaten their lives. We, too, face challenges and hardships. Life is not easy! Let us find "consolation" in the Holy Spirit and build up the Church and one another through prayer, generosity, and friendship.

**PRAY:** Consider spending an hour with Jesus in Eucharistic adoration. Find a small way to build up the Church beyond your family and parish by praying for Christians in other parts of the world.