

THE FIFTH WEEK IN EASTERTIDE

- Sun. **The Fifth Sunday in Easter Season**
May 15 **WHAT WE CELEBRATE EACH SUNDAY**
From On the Paschal Solemnity by Eusebius of Caesarea
- Mon . **Monday of the 5th Week in Eastertide**
16 **BEARING CHRIST'S PRESENCE TO THE WORLD**
A reflection from a Gospel commentary by Fr. Louis Lochet
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 5th Week in Eastertide**
17 **THE FREEDOM WE RECEIVE IN CHRIST**
Inspired by Baldwin of Canterbury's Twofold Resurrection
- Wed. **Wednesday of the 5th Week in Eastertide**
18 **BEARING THE FRUIT OF GODLY LOVE**
A reflection from The Fourth Gospel by Fr. Louis Bouyer
- Thurs. **Thursday of the 5th Week in Eastertide**
19 **THE REST CHRIST BRINGS**
A reflection developed from The Life in Christ by Nicholas Cabasilas
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Fri. **Friday of the 5th Week in Eastertide**
20 **THE GRACE OF WALKING THE WAY OF LOVE**
A reflection derived from a homily by Augustine of Hippo
- Sat. **Saturday of the 5th Week in Eastertide**
21 **DOES THE WORLD HATE YOU?**
A Homily by Karl Rahner

Sunday

WHAT WE CELEBRATE EACH SUNDAY

Taken from On the Paschal Solemnity by Eusebius of Caesarea

Under the Law of Moses, the paschal lamb was sacrificed once a year. Under the Law of Christ, we celebrate the Pasch at least once a week, and many celebrate it more often. We are continually being filled with the Body and Blood of the Savior. That means we continually prepare ourselves to leave behind all that does not express the love Christ has shown us and commanded us to imitate. We are always departing from whatever is Egypt for us and entering into the desert where we find only God and our Savior. God calls us to do this daily!

Doing this makes us God's people. That doesn't happen through ordinary circumcision, as it once did, but by letting the sharp edge of God's Word cut away all that is not born of Christ's love. We celebrate this with the unleavened bread that is sincerity and truth. Grace frees us from the old and re-creates us in the image of God as revealed in Jesus. We live under a new law and celebrate a new Passover.

While he was having his Last Supper with his disciples, the Lord said: "*With all my heart I have longed to eat this Passover with you*". He longed for the new Passover and the New Covenant that was his gift to them with his New Commandment. When we partake of this sort of food, we, with Christ, are filled with a longing for the salvation of all. We want everyone to have life in its abundance, because that is what Christ longed for and why he did all that he did. Love of God is inseparable from love for one another.

If we truly partake of the food of Christ's charity our minds and hearts are cleansed of all evil and wickedness and filled with sincerity and truth. We smear the blood of the One Lamb on the doorway to our inner being and the new person we become in doing this is a putting on of Christ, as St. Paul says.

When we go into the "desert" we fast from all that bound us to the old life we lived according to the ways of this world as it has been shaped by sin and selfishness. We do this so we may partake of the Lord's Passover by receiving his body and blood, not only physically but spiritually. This means that our spirit and its love are transformed. We no longer love ourselves first and care for ourselves first. We love our God first and do all we do to praise and glorify and please God. How can we please God except by letting God's Kingdom come among us and within us?

This is not something we have to do in Jerusalem, nor is it something that we have to do only once a year and in some special ceremony. We do it day in and day out, as often as we remember the Lord's gift of self to the Heavenly Father and for us. We do it not only in our church but in the places where we work and share with those who labor at ordinary tasks with us. Our Lord Christ spent himself continually bringing healing and inner peace to people of every kind and circumstance. How could we be content to do less? This is how we put on Christ more and more completely.

Monday

BEARING CHRIST'S PRESENCE TO THE WORLD

A reflection from a Gospel commentary by Fr. Louis Lochet

Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone loves me he will keep my word and my Father will love that person and we will come and make our home in that person. There is, if you pause to think about it, a profound reason for Christ's appearing as he did after the resurrection. Jesus came to them in visible form so as to gradually accustom them to his invisible presence through faith. That invisible presence is far more real than the visible one! The great gift he came to give to the world was that of recognizing this presence.

Jesus had foretold the mystery of his passion and resurrection. He did this so as to help them open themselves to a new mode of being with him. "I tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away, for otherwise, the Paraclete will not come to you." The promises of Jesus make it evident that the abiding of the Spirit in the heart is not simply a way of replacing Christ's personal presence but of renewing and prolonging it in an even more intimate way.

"I shall be with you; because I live you too will live in me". This means sharing in the life of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The Father shows himself in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Father and Son give themselves in the Spirit. We possess the Three-in-one within ourselves. We rejoice in them and share in their life. Christ's presence in the Spirit establishes the Church, and so its unity and Catholicity. It gave the apostles courage to spread themselves throughout the world, and so to spread Christ, while remaining one in Christ. They had to leave an empty Jerusalem Temple and learn to find within them a consecrated temple where the living God abides.

They were upheld by God and so carried God's word to the world. St. Paul says, "Do not be afraid; speak out and do not be silent, for I am with you". He is talking about Christ in us. The first Christians loved to recognize this dynamic speaking out in the martyrs. Christ was their strength. Christ fought, suffered and triumphed in them. That is why they were so perfectly at peace. Death did not so much cut them off from the world as unite them forever to the triumphant Christ. What the apostles took to the world was the presence of Christ within them. This is the same presence we are learning to recognize and rejoice in. By letting it make itself known in our love for others we give them the opportunity to recognize Christ living in us, and ask their permission to live within them too.

God intends to transform and save our world not through special divine interventions but through the working of his love within and through us. This begins with the presence of the Spirit dwelling in us. We must not doubt that God can accomplish the entire plan of salvation in this way. Consider what Christ has already done within us as he has taught us how to love one another and to live together in that love.

Tuesday

THE FREEDOM WE RECEIVE IN CHRIST

Developed from Baldwin of Canterbury's Twofold Resurrection

The Lord has shown us that resurrection is the fruit of loving obedience. Christ is resurrection and life personified and these are the first fruits he seeks to share with us. But why am I talking about a twofold resurrection when Christ rose only once? The reason is that we have to be raised from the death that is sin as well as the death that is of the body, but Christ had only to rise only from the body's death because he had already shown us how to entirely avoid sin. A single resurrection answered to a single death for Christ. But we have died twice.

Nevertheless, the resurrection of Christ is the exemplar and cause of both of our resurrections. We rise for the first time by faith and by its sacramental expression in baptism. By faith, we are re-created, justified, sanctified and raised from the death that is sin. This is our first resurrection. By it, we die to sin and are raised to a new life. By it, we live for and in holiness by walking in the newness of life which Christ has shown us.

Our first resurrection begins when we first show loving obedience to God. We do the opposite of what our first parents did when they loved themselves and disobeyed God. The lack of love led to the lack of obedience, and the lack of loving obedience embodied sin and lead to death, both spiritually and physically. But in Christ and by his love we are freed! We are freed to love and obey our God with all our hearts.

This first resurrection has a special glory that St. Paul speaks about. "Far be it from me, he tells us, to glory in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". But this glorying in the cross brings us knowledge that "*our glory is in the hope of our adoption as God's children*". When to turn to God in love we begin to walk in the way of holiness that is shown us by God's commandments. We begin to love God with all our heart and mind and strength, and then we begin to love our neighbor not only as we love ourselves but as Christ has shown us love by loving us even unto death.

If we continue in obedient love until God calls us through death, then we enter into the second resurrection. That begins as our full adoption as God's children, our glorification with Christ and all the saints. This glory will be that of one who sees God in the glory of God's divinity. That glory is manifested in the body by its incorruptibility. Then it is that this perishable nature of ours puts on imperishability. In God's presence, all will sing the praises of God together and forever. Our mouths will be filled with the sounds of rejoicing and with hymns of gladness. Our song will be love and our love will be for God and for one another and for the beauty of all creation. We must start now. Blessed be God forever! May our love proclaim this every day and forever.

Wednesday

BEARING THE FRUIT OF GODLY LOVE

A reflection from The Fourth Gospel by Fr. Louis Bouyer

“Jesus said to his disciples: I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser.” All through Scripture, the vine is a symbol of God’s Chosen People. It is a symbol chosen because it reminds us of the loving care which our God has for those united with him as a part of the “true Israel”. However, we must recall again the fact that a “vine” always means an entire vineyard in Scripture. The point is that a vineyard is a better symbol of the unity that God’s love brings us than is a single vine.

Jesus declares he is not only united with his disciples but is one with them. Jesus is the source of the disciples’ life and calls them to form one single organism with him. Jesus is no longer viewing himself as an individual but as a living collective that is a perfect unity. All regenerated humanity is part of this organism. This corresponds to the Pauline theology of the Church as Christ’s Mystical Body. Jesus and his members aren’t separate entities any more than is a body’s head and its members. Yet I think the theology of Christ the vine better expresses this profound unity.

There is no question of two complementary elements. There is one Divine Person extending his incarnation from the main stem, Jesus, to all the branches. Christ is the living principle of unity for the whole Church. It is only through Jesus that the vine, the Church, can thrust roots into the depths of the divine life and ensure that the divine life and love find their way to the farthest branches.

Jesus is the source and the branches must draw from the life-spring in Christ.

We are called to accept two facts. First, branches can’t bear fruit separated from Christ but must remain organically united with him. This is what the Lord meant by saying: *“unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you can’t have life”*. Second, the branches, because they are in Christ, have to bear fruit. If they don’t they will be pruned away. Believers grafted into Christ, pulsing with the grace of a life-union, are pruned or purged away. What God intends is that they bear more and more fruit. Whoever closes self against this life-giving action of the vine-sap is removed and burnt. The sap is love; a love that does nothing isn’t love. Only active love springs from union with Christ.

Again, what is the fruit? The organic unity between Christ and his own has but one fruit, a union of love. The whole purpose of the incarnation is to establish disciples in God’s trinitarian love. As Christ is in the Father’s love so we are to be in his love. This is obedience. It is by this obedience that Christ remains in the Father’s love and that those who follow Christ remain in his love. Obedience either bears the fruit of love or it is neither Christian nor Godly. Godly love draws all together in unity and the unity is one of mutually loving and caring for each other, for all God’s children.

Thursday

THE REST CHRIST BRINGS

A reflection developed from *The Life In Christ* by Nicholas Cabasilas

The Christian's resting place is in Christ. He alone is goodness and truth and all that is lovable. That means that nothing in Christ prevents a person who rests in Him from loving with all the love that God placed in our spirits in the beginning. Nothing in Christ prevents such a person from rejoicing to the full extent of human capacity. What is more, one's capacity is increased by growth in virtue and Christian maturity as one lives out the gifts received in the water of rebirth.

We can't find full joy or love in our relations with the good things, as they are called, of this present life. All these things seem good, and, in some measure, they are; yet they are still only reflections of what is genuinely good and lovable. In Christ, however, we find a love and a joy that are wonderful beyond the power of words to describe. This is because God, in creating all things, ordained that love and joy should be directed first and last toward Himself. Why? It is because God is infinite good and has infinite joy, and wants to make us capable of entering into goods that are infinite, into himself, and so into joy that has no measure. That is why God made us, and all our feelings, for Himself. It is God's greatest gift.

Consider for a moment the greatness of God's love. If we would appreciate how wonderful it is to simply love God with the power to love that is God's gift; it overbalances and cancels every unpaid debt we can owe. If the divine judge regards love as balancing innumerable blessings who can doubt that it is surpassingly excellent and wonderful?

Now it is clear that the plenitude of love is fully matched by the plenitude of joy. Joy corresponds in every way to love. The fullness of the one follows from the fullness of the other. We know that human persons have a great and wonderful capacity for both love and joy, but that this joy is experienced most fully in the presence of the beloved.

The truly supreme beauty, the true beauty, is the Savior. He himself calls these feelings perfect when they are experienced in this way. When the Spirit comes to dwell within us it brings various fruits. The first of these to manifest themselves is love and joy. Scripture itself calls these the fruits of the Holy Spirit. That is because God is love and God is joy and the first thing that God does when He comes to dwell in us is to make us aware of these truths. God is the supreme good and anyone who is aware of the presence within of supreme good cannot fail to love that good and rejoice in it. Rejoice with all your heart and strength and share that joy with all those you encounter. This is our vocation and our joy.

Friday

THE GRACE OF WALKING THE WAY OF LOVE

A reflection derived from a homily by Augustine of Hippo

“It is my Father’s glory that you bear much fruit and become my disciples”. This is what Jesus tells us as an undeniable fact. Yet when we follow Jesus and do bear fruit for God’s Kingdom we acquire no right to claim credit for doing so. To carry out the work of love that Jesus commands supposes the grace God gives us so we can do it. So the glory is all God’s. Jesus reminds us of this when he says: *“Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Heavenly Father.”*

It gives the Heavenly Father glory that we become and remain Jesus’ disciples and do the good works that he commands us. What is more, it is only through the mercy of our God that these things are done. We are God’s handiwork, created in Jesus Christ for the doing of good works. But even when we do as Jesus commands what is the source of these good works? God’s love. Jesus said: *“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love”.* There we see the source of every good work. It comes to be only because a gift of faith is active in love. But how could we love if we had not ourselves first been loved? In the First Letter of John, this is made quite clear: *“Let us love God because God first loved us”.*

The Heavenly Father loves us and loves us in the Son. We glorify God by bearing the sort of fruit Jesus bore, and we can do it because we are branches on the vine that is the Son. This is what it means to become Jesus’ disciples. So we must abide in Jesus’ love. How can we do that? Jesus tells us: *“If you observe what I command you then you will truly abide in my love”.* Further, it is love that makes us keep those commands; there is no doubt that love comes first. Anyone without love lacks the incentive needed to keep the commands. So when Christ says, *“if you keep my commands you will abide in my love”*, he tells us that the keeping of the commands is not the source of love but is the gauge and proof of love.

It is as though Jesus had said to us: Don’t suppose you are abiding in my love if you are not keeping my commands, for it is by keeping them that you abide in that love. Your observance is the proof, the outward manifestation, of the fact that you abide in his love. You can’t declare “I love God” without keeping God’s commands. To do that would be to deceive yourself. The great and new command of Jesus is to love as he has loved. It is only to the extent that we keep this command that we “abide” in Jesus’ love and the love of the Heavenly Father. To fail to keep the command to love is to fail to love. So we cannot keep the command in order to make God love us but we keep the command because the Heavenly Father already loves us and gives us the gift that is grace—the gift of divine mercy. It is a grace always there for the humble of heart. It is beyond the reach of the proud and the self-reliant. To love like Jesus is to rejoice in God’s love, and to abide in it. This is the love that is our God and the love that makes us one with our God.

Saturday

DOES THE WORLD HATE YOU?

A Homily by Karl Rahner

“You must not be surprised when the world hates you”, we are told. If we look at the context of this verse we find the following: “We are to love one another, not to be like Cain, who belonged to the Evil One and cut his brother’s throat”. We must not be people who hate others because we cannot endure goodness. According to John, love and kindness and holiness and justice arouse hatred. He assumes that Christians are people who do good works, like Abel. So John thinks that goodness and justice provoke the antagonism, anger and hatred of the unjust because they cannot endure the contrast with themselves; they want to see their actions endorsed by the actions of others, and they are forced to blame themselves and disavow their actions if they meet someone else whose deeds are just and good, even to the point of loving their evil attackers. So goodness stirs up malice, love stirs up hatred, and justices injustice. Injustice comes to light and is exposed because it cannot bear goodness. Now John says that this must happen to us; he admonishes us not to be surprised when it does happen to us.

Let us be perfectly frank. Can we say that the world hates us? Do we suffer violence and impoverishment for conscience's sake? To be honest, we are no better off than many other countries, we have our difficulties and perhaps our tragedies, but we cannot really pretend that the world hates us because we are just, because we love those who hate us. Now if this is the case, are we really what we should be, people that St. John can assume will be hated by the world and who must be admonished not to wonder at that hatred? By this standard of real Christianity, we may well find ourselves wanting before God and our conscience.

We need the light of God, fidelity and purity of conscience that is able to criticize self and criticize the world. A staggering task! We must keep asking ourselves whether we are not, in St. Paul’s phrase, too much conformed to this world. We must keep asking whether we do not misrepresent Christianity and give scandal to those who are in search of true Christianity because we pretend to be Christians and are nothing of the kind. May God gives us the grace to bear the real hatred of the world with courage and equanimity; and may God give the Church of today and her hierarchy, and each one of us in our own lives, the grace not to make Christianity seem to the world unworthy of credence through our own fault.