

# FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

## Monday in the Fifth Week of Easter

### Collect

MAY your right hand, O Lord, we pray, encompass your family with perpetual help, so that, defended from all wickedness by the Resurrection of your Only-Begotten Son, we may make our way by means of your heavenly gifts. 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.

### Reading

*John 14:21-26 (RSV)*

*The Holy Spirit, the Counsellor, will teach you all things*

Jesus said to his disciples: <sup>21</sup> He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.' <sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?' <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, 'If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. <sup>24</sup> He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

<sup>25</sup> 'These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.'

### Reflection

WE HAVE very little idea of what took place during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. We have some Resurrection Appearances and twice we are assured by St John that much else happens. At the end of John 20 we are told:

**<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may**

**believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.**

At the end of John 21 we hear much the same:

**<sup>25</sup> But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.**

By contrast with this limited amount of information, there is considerable material in what are sometimes called 'The Farewell Discourses', chapters 14 to 17. These words are spoken between the Last Supper and the Arrest of Jesus and it is highly possible that what we have here is material from the time spent by the Risen Lord with his disciples or material from Jesus' earlier ministry or indeed both.

In today's passage, Jesus speaks of the One who, after him, will encourage the Church, teach, and bear witness. The word used in older translations was 'Comforter' – one who comforts in the sense of strengthening. Other words are 'Advocate' (Jerusalem Bible) and 'Counsellor' (Revised Standard Version). We cannot limit, or even describe, the Breath of God which is the Holy Spirit, so it is good that we have a few inadequate words. What is promised is a Divine Person who is more than a Comforter, more than an Advocate, and more than a Counsellor. Certainly he will comfort us – give encouragement and strength. Certainly he will speak up for us – helping us to understand the will of God and to express ourselves as we try to expound it to others. And he will be a Counsellor, guiding us into all truth and protecting us as we seek to make our way and live the Christian life.

## **Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Easter**

### **Collect**

O GOD , who restore us to eternal life in the Resurrection of Christ: grant your people constancy in faith and hope, that we may never doubt the promises which we have learned from you. 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.

## Reading

*John 14:27-31 (RSV)*

*Jesus bequeathes to his disciples the gift of Peace*

Jesus said to his disciples: <sup>27</sup> 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. <sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, "I go away, and I will come to you." If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe. <sup>30</sup> I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; <sup>31</sup> but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go hence.'

## Reflection

THE GIFT of Jesus to his disciples as he prepares to leave them is Peace, a peace such as the world cannot give. It is hard to do justice to the word 'Peace' which, in context, refers to a state of wholeness and perfection, tranquil and permanent. Our awareness of its importance has been heightened by the building in of the 'Sign of Peace' into our eucharistic celebrations, a sign now notably missing from our lives, where even a simple handshake – let alone an embrace – is presently not available beyond the four walls in which we live. Yet we need to remember that Jesus is here speaking to his disciples: there is no mention of any physical expression of Peace. Peace can be given and shared in a word.

It is also important to notice that the gift of Peace does not bring about ideal conditions. Jesus and later his disciples were faced with hardship, danger, and death. 'The ruler of this world is coming', says Jesus, and, though he has no power over Jesus, Jesus does as the Father commands. Missing from the Gospel passage in the lectionary are the final few words of the chapter. 'Rise, let us go hence'. This should serve to remind us that we are now at the end of the Supper and going out into the night where events seemingly very different from the wholeness and perfection of which Jesus speaks are about to take place.

# Wednesday in the Fifth Week of Easter

## Collect

O God, restorer and lover of innocence: direct the hearts of your servants towards yourself, that those you have set free from the darkness of unbelief may never stray from the light of your truth. 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.

## Reading

*John 15:1-8 (RSV)*

### *Jesus the True Vine*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.'

## Reflection

WE READILY respond to the metaphor of the Vine. It's a very simple image. Jesus is like the tree itself – the vine – and we, his followers, are the branches. Branches which do not flourish are pruned away, allowing for fresh growth. The Father is the Vinedresser. The imagery is very much rooted – to use a suitable metaphor – in the Old Testament, where Israel is seen as the Lord's vineyard (Isaiah 5; Jeremiah 12) or as a 'choice vine' (Jeremiah 2), a 'luxuriant vine' (Hosea 10). We may worry about the idea of being 'pruned away': am I bearing fruit, am I productive? This worry often translates into worry about everyday living. Am I a good friend, parent, spouse, teacher? Apparently many people worry about Imposter Syndrome – feeling as though they are not really up to doing whatever it is they are supposed to do. Self-worth is not something most of us are very good at.

I suggest that the more important thing in this passage to reflect on and take to heart is the word 'abide'. I looked up the meaning of 'abide' on the internet. I'm told that it has a particular biblical meaning – and certainly we did come across it a little while ago a couple of times in the story of the Road to Emmaus ('Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' Luke 24:29). The definition I found was that 'to abide' is 'to remain stable or fixed in a state', 'to continue in a place'. Nowhere is this stronger than in the last verse of Psalm 23, abiding in the House of the Lord. The longing to be in the Lord's Temple – a longing of which have a heightened awareness at present – is there in Psalm 84 as well as in today's Psalm, 122. But we mustn't get stuck on the idea of the Lord's House – except, of course, that it is the place where Christ in his sacramental Presence lastingly abides. The Risen Christ, as we discover in the New Testament, over and over again, is God's New Temple, into which we are built as Living Stones. 'And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb' (Rev 21:22). It is certainly helpful that we have a number of different metaphors for living *in Christo*, in Christ. We are members of his Body. He is the Temple of which we are part. He is the True Vine, of which we are branches. He encourages us 'to bear much fruit, and so prove to be [his] disciples.'

## Thursday in the Fifth Week of Easter

### Collect

O God, by whose grace, though sinners, we are made just and, though pitiable, made blessed: stand, we pray, by your works, stand by your gifts, that those justified by faith may not lack the courage of perseverance. 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.

### Reading

*John 15:9-11(RSV)*

*Abide in my love*

Jesus said to his disciples: <sup>9</sup> 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.'

## Reflection

THE GOSPEL yesterday was about Jesus the True Vine and the importance of 'abiding' in his love. In fact, 'abiding' in the love of Jesus is the main point the image of the Vine is conveying. The fruits of this 'abiding', like the fruits of the Vine, are entirely dependent on the branches of the Vine being well-maintained and properly attached to the trunk of the tree. The way to 'abide' in the love of Jesus is keep his commandments and we shall be considering that further in tomorrow's Gospel.

## Friday in the Fifth Week of Easter

### Collect

GRANT us, Lord, we pray, that, being rightly conformed to the paschal mysteries, what we celebrate in joy may protect and save us with perpetual power. 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.

### Reading

*John 15:12-17 (RSV)*

*Love one another as I have loved you*

Jesus said to his disciples: <sup>12</sup> 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. <sup>17</sup> This I command you, to love one another.

### Reflection

IN THE Gospel, we begin and end with the command to love one another, and, as the opening verse makes clear, the love which the disciples must show is the love with which Jesus has loved them. This is a theme addressed further in 1 John 4:10-11. 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.'

The love of God, shown by Jesus, is a radical love, in which he lays down his life for his friends. This laying down of life is not only an expiation – a cleansing – but an atonement, establishing an entirely new relationship between God and humankind. We become ‘friends’ (*philoï*) and not ‘slaves’ (*douloï*). We enter freely into a loving relationship with God not because we choose to but because he chose us. This sounds soft and comfy, or even elitist and privileged, until we realise that our calling is to ‘go and bear fruit’. As we know, for a chosen few, throughout history, bearing fruit has entailed sharing in the laying down of life in faithful witness. For everyone else, the call is for lasting fruit that ‘should abide’. There’s that word ‘abide’ again that we met a couple of days ago. Called to bear lasting fruit, we are called into a lasting relationship of fruitful love with God and with one another.

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## The May Magnificat

*Gerard Manley Hopkins SJ*  
(1844–89)

MAY is Mary's month, and I  
Muse at that and wonder why:  
Her feasts follow reason,  
Dated due to season—

Candlemas, Lady Day;  
But the Lady Month, May,  
Why fasten that upon her,  
With a feasting in her honour?

Is it only its being brighter  
Than the most are must delight  
her?

Is it opportunist  
And flowers finds soonest?

Ask of her, the mighty mother:  
Her reply puts this other  
Question: What is Spring?—  
Growth in every thing—

Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,  
Grass and greenworld all  
together;  
Star-eyed strawberry-breasted  
Throstle above her nested

Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin  
Forms and warms the life within;  
And bird and blossom swell  
In sod or sheath or shell.

All things rising, all things sizing  
Mary sees, sympathising  
With that world of good,  
Nature's motherhood.

Their magnifying of each its kind  
With delight calls to mind  
How she did in her stored  
Magnify the Lord.

Well but there was more than  
this:  
Spring's universal bliss  
Much, had much to say  
To offering Mary May.

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-  
dapple  
Bloom lights the orchard-apple  
And thicket and thorp are merry  
With silver-surfed cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes  
Wood banks and brakes wash  
wet like lakes  
And magic cuckoocall  
Caps, clears, and clinches all—

This ecstasy all through  
mothering earth  
Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's  
birth  
To remember and exultation  
In God who was her salvation.