

Fr Rudy's Reflections  
The Fifth Sunday of Easter  
April 28, 2024

### Abide in Me

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Life is a series of connections, and as we pass through different phases of our life, we form bonds with other people that can be instrumental to our development as human beings. From the moment we open our eyes at birth, we see before us a woman's face who will abide with us and influence our days. A male figure, too, might be present that will hold us in his arms and breathe words of love into our tiny ears. Later, we will develop attachments with other family members who care for our needs and show us great love. As we branch out on our own, our world expands: the excitement of play dates with toddler friends; the camaraderie of grade school friendships; the attachment to high school and college peers; and the mutually beneficial bonds we develop through chosen careers, neighborhood friendships, volunteerism, and church and school connections of our family life. Finally, as we reach life's sunset, we may reside with peers in senior living arrangements where our connection involves shared memories of days gone by. All these relationships have merit as we travel together here on earth. They are, however, human bonds only and cannot provide what our soul truly needs to grow and sustain itself eternally—only through Jesus Christ can our souls bear its beautiful fruit.

It is the Fifth Sunday of Easter, and on this lovely day in spring, we are connecting with the extraordinary Gospel of John, wherein Jesus explains in a discourse, part of his Last Supper Discourse, chapters 14–17, what he wants us to know, what is truly in his heart. In this passage Jesus describes, with beautiful agrarian imagery, the living, breathing organism of his Church, rooted in love and service, that survives him and brings his message of hope and salvation to all mankind. Jesus says to us, "I am the vine, and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing." Hence, we are part of him; he is the vine of life, and without him, our branches will wither and die. We can never produce fruit on our own without his impact, inspiration, life force, spirit, and guidance in all we do and whom we ultimately become.

In today's world, independence, self-reliance, and many other traits that promote our egoism are valued by society. According to Bishop Robert Barron, Jesus is the word made flesh and "the embodiment of the power by which God sustains the world. . . anything that exists came to be through him." We are not children of God who reside in a vacuum, relying only on ourselves for structure and order, or on other human bonds that will extend to us care and concern. The Lord is our light, salvation, and the sole guide to steer our journey. Toward him.

*"He has called us to the superior vocation of being His children, of partaking of His nature, and of being related to Him as branches to a vine. Few of us completely want that elevation; it is our petty desire to have more, not to share the glory of being more."*—Bishop Fulton Sheen

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. Rudy