

Abide in Me as I Abide in You
May 2, 2021, Fifth Sunday of Easter
Gospel of John 15:1-8
Fr. Brad

'Abide in me as I abide in you.' The word *abide* means *'to remain, to continue, to stay, to find one's home in.'*

So what are the implications of 'abiding in Christ' as Jesus invites us to do in the Gospel?

The second reading cites an example of what 'abiding in' means when it says, whenever our hearts condemn us or perhaps when we are too ready to condemn someone else, we rather, choose to refrain from actually doing it because God is greater than our hearts.

We give God the last word.

If we abide in God, we will defer any conclusions we may be tempted to draw about other people and about ourselves.

That's why any actions or choices on our part need to come through prayer and not simply be a product of our own first thoughts and impulses.

And if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God. Obeying his commandments and doing what pleases Him gives us confidence to ask for what for what we want as it is already at the service of the Will of God. St. Augustine once said, 'He does what we ask only if it is for our good.'

Saul's abiding in Christ allowed him to be bold in his witness.

The first reading recounts Saul's first entry into Jerusalem after his conversion. It was Barnabas who took him to the apostles and endorsed the authenticity of his conversion to the Lord.

This was then demonstrated by Saul's speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord throughout Jerusalem, and also through his risky actions of arguing with the Hellenists who wanted to kill him.

If we see the church as that common union into which we humbly enter, in response to God's call and invitation to us, we need to surrender our individual autonomy over into the care of God. We need to learn to put our own agendas aside. We need to abide in Him as the source of our lives. It is through a complete surrender to him that God can use us in his creative and redemptive work.

There are many health care workers out there right now, who have virtually abandoned their own agendas for many months in order to serve the needs of those with Covid. There is a massive strain on personnel and on the health care system and there are

other illnesses need attention too. These workers are examples of those who have chosen to risk their own health and stretch their limits in order to do what they believe is the right thing to do. When we abandon ourselves to God and His work, we are truly abiding in Him and He will abide in us. Then through us, God can reach into the world to reshape it, to reform it, and to redeem it.

Make no mistake, His work continues with or without our conscious participation. Yet the Lord's commitment to us through his covenant is with us no matter what. We have God's presence **among us** and even **within us** when we abide in him.

Our ongoing goal as followers of Christ is then to conform our hearts, and our minds, and our bodies to be members of Christ himself.

Whereas Jesus uses the images of branches and vine to describe the eternal unity with Him, Paul uses the image of Temple and body. The love that its members show one another is to empower that body to serve the rest of the world. Since that way of being counters the way most of the world is run, resistance and division are inevitable.

As a community we demonstrate our desire to nurture this growing abiding in Him every time we participate in the Eucharistic celebration, whether in person or on livestream.

Through choosing to receive the Body and Blood of his only Son Jesus Christ and through choosing to hear His Word proclaimed, we express our desire to abide in Him and Him in us in accomplishing his work in the world. In that genuine desire, we bear fruit and God will help us prune out whatever is getting in the way. My job is not to be perfect but to remain in you Jesus, and let you do good within me and through me with and through you. And when the fruits of the Holy Spirit grow in me, I am bearing fruit.

So in this Eucharist may we ask for the grace of a compassionate heart, and forgiving heart, for minds that are focussed on love and for respect for each other. May we all bear good fruit and be accepting of the pruning each one of us needs in our ongoing faith journey. Amen