

A Reading from a commentary on St. John's Gospel

By Cyril of Alexandria

The Lord calls himself the vine and those united to him branches in order to teach us how much we shall benefit from our union with him, and how important it is for us to remain in his love. By receiving the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of union between us and Christ our Savior, those who are joined to him, as branches are to a vine, share in his own nature.

On the part of those who come to the vine, their union with him depends upon a deliberate act of the will; on his part, the union is effected by grace. Because we had good will, we made the act of faith that brought us to Christ, and received from him the dignity of adoption that made us his own kin, according to the words of St Paul: 'Whoever is joined to the Lord in one spirit with him.'

The prophet Isaiah calls Christ the foundation, because it is upon him that we as living and spiritual stones are built into a holy priesthood to be a dwelling place for God in the Spirit. Upon no other foundation than Christ can this temple be built. Here Christ is teaching the same truth by calling himself the vine, since the vine is the parent of its branches, and provides their nourishment.

From Christ and in Christ, we have been reborn through the Spirit in order to bear the fruit of life; not the fruit of our old, sinful life but the fruit of a new life founded upon our faith in him and our love for him. Like branches growing from a vine, we now draw our life from Christ, and we cling to his holy commandment in order to preserve this life. Eager to safeguard the blessing of our noble birth, we are careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and who makes us aware of God's presence in us.

Let the wisdom of John, then, teach us how we live in Christ and Christ live in us: 'The proof that we are living in him and he is living in us is that he has given us a share in his Spirit.' Just as the trunk of the vine gives its own natural properties to each of its branches, so, by bestowing on them the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, gives Christians a certain kinship with himself and with God the Father because they have been united to him by faith and determination to do his will in all things. He helps them to grow in love and reverence for God, and teaches them to discern right from wrong and to act with integrity.

[Source: Celebrating the Seasons]

APRIL:

- ♦ April 28, Sunday, 3:00 p.m. French Service

MAY:

- ♦ May 1. Labor Day. NON-WORKING Holiday
- ♦ May 4, Saturday.
 - * Vestry Planning day, 9:00a.m.
 - * ECW monthly meeting, 2:00p.m.
- ♦ May 12, Sunday, 3:00p.m., Wedding

- ♦ May 18, Saturday, 12noon-5:00p.m., Norway Day
- ♦ May 19, Vestry meeting 11:30 a.m., Vestry meeting
- ♦ May 25, Saturday, 2:00p.m., Wedding
- ♦ May 26, TRINITY SUNDAY, JOINT SERVICE, 8:30a.m. Potluck follows.
- ♦ May 26, 2:00p.m., Wedding

SAINTS:

Peter Chanel, Missionary in the South Pacific, 28 April. Peter Chanel was born at Cras in France in 1803 and after ordination, joined the Marist missionary congregation in 1831. In 1836 he was sent to the islands of the South Pacific to preach the faith. Peter and his companions brought healing medicines as well as the gospel and were much loved and respected. On the island of Futuna in the Fiji group, where Peter was living, the chief's son asked for baptism, which so infuriated his father that he dispatched a group of warriors with explicit orders to murder Peter. They attacked him with clubs, axes and knives and he died on this day in the year 1841. Within a year, the whole island was Christian and Peter became revered throughout the Pacific Islands and Australasia as its protomartyr.

Catherine of Siena, 29 April. Catherine Benincasa was born in 1347, the second youngest of twenty-five children. Pious from her earliest years, she overcame family opposition to her vocation and became a Dominican tertiary at the age of eighteen. Nourished by a life of contemplative prayer and mystical experience, she devoted herself to active care for the poor and sick. She became increasingly sought out as an adviser on political as well as religious matters and, in 1376, she journeyed to Avignon as an ambassador to the pope and influenced his decision to return to Rome. She wrote a *Dialogue* on the spiritual life as well as numerous letters of counsel and direction, which stressed her devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus. She suffered a stroke on 21 April and died eight days later, on this day in the year 1380.

Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, 2 May. Athanasius was born in about the year 296 of Christian parents and educated at the Catechetical school in Alexandria. He was present at the Council of Nicaea as a deacon, accompanying his bishop Alexander, whom he succeeded as Patriarch in the year 328. Athanasius held firmly to the doctrines of the Church as defined by that Council, and became the leader of those opposed to the teachings of Arian, which denied the divinity of Christ. He was deposed from -- and restored to -- his See several times because of his uncompromising faith. In or out of exile, Athanasius continued his writings, ever the proponent of orthodoxy over heterodoxy and the essential need for the Church to teach the true doctrines of the faith rather than watered-down versions of it. He was a strong believer in asceticism as a means of restoring the divine image in humanity and thus a supporter of monasticism, which was in its nascent state at that time. He was a friend of Pachomius and wrote the *Life of Antony of Egypt*, which showed the cenobitic life as holding a balance between things earthly and heavenly. He died on this day in the year 373.

