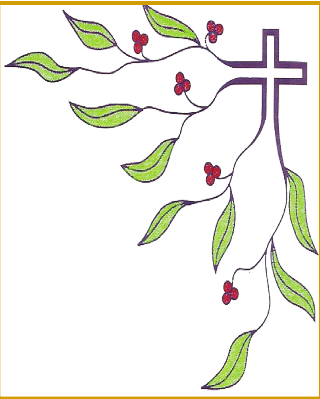


**REFLECTION:** Jesus, I remember a time I needed your strength to get through a hard time in my life... I remember... I remember...

# “I am the True Vine”

5th Sunday of Easter  
Cycle B | April 28, 2024



### WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

I remember the day I got locked up... I remember having a bad vibe in my heart that my freedom and my life was coming to an end. I was full of pain, anger, and revenge. I thought life was full of lies and neglect. I was misunderstood, drifting in the wrong direction in my barrio and running away from the problems I was facing. My brothers were taken away. Both of my parents were in prison and I didn't care about what I did to others and I did not care about what happened to me. Nothing seemed to stop me from leaving the lifestyle I was living... not even getting shot. I thought it was a sign to slow down and open my eyes, but I refused to listen. It just pulled me even deeper into the gang life. It gave me even a bigger reason for retaliation and hate towards my rivals. Eventually, I found myself committing numerous crimes.

I remember seeing the pain in my mother's eyes when they told her how much time I was facing. In all of my court dates, it was my first time seeing her in two years. I was going to trial to see if they would charge me as a juvenile and not as an adult. I was looking at prison time and eventually lost my fitness.

Everything happens for a reason. God does not put us through anything we cannot handle. Till this day I am glad I got locked up. If I didn't, I would have probably ended up dead for the life I was living.

All I can do now is go day by day, make better choices and ask our Lord Jesus Christ to answer my prayers, be with me, and give me the strength to go another day behind these walls. I still have a few years to go, so for now I am keeping my faith and praying for better days. I will probably never get out. But at least I have a second chance in life.

- Marcus, who is in a juvenile detention center.

### PENITENTIAL RITE

**Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.**  
May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.  
**R. Amen.**

### OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray:  
Lord,  
We come to you today full of doubts, full of questions, but also with a desire to follow you. Show us today the truth of your ways.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.  
**R. Amen.**

### OUR FATHER

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us:  
**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**  
**R. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

### SIGN OF PEACE

Jesus, you said to your apostles: “I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live forever and ever. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
**R. And with your spirit.**

### LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: **have mercy on us.**  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: **have mercy on us.**  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: **grant us peace.**

This is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are we who are called to his supper.

**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

### COMMUNION

### CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray:  
Lord,  
You are the way, the truth, and the life. In our own darkness, light up the path that leads to you. Give us the courage to follow that path, to know our friends on that path so we may bear the fruit of recognizing you in our lives.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**



## LITURGY OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Acts 9: 26-31

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles, and he reported to them how he had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem, and spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord. He also spoke and debated with the Hellenists, but they tried to kill him. And when the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him on his way to Tarsus. The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

The Word of the Lord.  
**R. Thanks be to God.**

### Second Reading: 1 John 3: 18-24

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he gave us.

The Word of the Lord.  
**R. Thanks be to God.**

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22: 26-27, 28, 30

**R. I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.**

I will fulfill my vows before those who fear the LORD.

The lowly shall eat their fill;  
they who seek the LORD shall praise him:  
"May your hearts live forever!"

**R. I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.**

All the ends of the earth  
shall remember and turn to the LORD;  
all the families of the nations  
shall bow down before him.

**R. I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.**

To him alone shall bow down  
all who sleep in the earth;  
before him shall bend  
all who go down into the dust.

**R. I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.**

### Gospel: John 15: 1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## MEDITATION: ALIVE

it was early morning  
there was a silence  
a stillness reigning  
nothing was moving

mary was sitting down  
staring out into  
the darkness  
sadness was  
choking her heart  
periodic warm tears  
falling down her cheeks

strong memories  
feelings of  
powerlessness  
jesus had always  
told her that one day  
he would be treated  
just like the people  
with whom he walked  
and preached  
to with those  
he compassionately  
cured

why was she left alone  
by her son's disciples  
during those days  
of terror?

they had just  
recently professed  
how committed  
they were in  
her son's project  
boldly stating that  
they weren't afraid  
of his enemies

it was a  
piercing-heart feeling  
being powerless  
defenseless  
beneath the cross

alone  
breathing in  
the stillness of  
the early morning  
reflecting on what  
she was going to do  
where would she live

in this moment  
a rush of air  
of someone passing  
as she was turning  
around in the dark  
a feeling that  
only a mother knows

mary knew  
her son was nearby  
jesus?  
mary whispering

jesus  
blood  
nails  
torture all mixing  
in this moment

jesus was  
coming closer  
mother  
i have come  
to be with you  
to let you know  
your son is alive

mother  
i always told you  
my way will be hard  
it will be hard  
to follow the dream  
of all being equal  
of all being brothers  
and sisters  
of all having a place  
at the banquet table  
where those at  
the base are valued

this dream  
cannot be destroyed  
by the romans  
or pharisees  
they cannot destroy  
this dream where  
we do not have  
enemies where  
we are all loved  
for who we are

mother  
i know presently  
many think this dream  
has been eclipsed  
the powerful  
they think  
it will be easier to  
continue with the lie  
that it is better to live  
with divisions  
with inequality  
with individualism  
thank you mother  
for being with me

especially during  
these last days  
i could see and feel  
in you mother  
that you knew  
none of my suffering  
was in vain  
you always knew  
this dream could never  
really be destroyed  
to build a better world  
is costly  
because of such  
blindness and  
hardness of heart  
in our country  
i know the disciples  
are still discouraged  
but little by little  
the real presence  
in the world  
the real power  
that comes from  
my rising will give them  
strength to continue  
in my abba's project

mary was deeply  
consoled being  
with her son again  
knowing now  
in the morning light  
how jesus' power  
his way  
really is the way  
that leads to true life  
eternal life  
real victory

