

May 4-9: May 4 Monday: Jn 14: 21-26: 21 *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.* 22 *Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"* 23 *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.* 24 *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.* 25 *"These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you.* 26 *But the Counselor, 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.*

The context: Today's Gospel passage is taken from Jesus' Last Super discourse. It was commonly held by the Jews that when the Messiah came he would be revealed to the whole world as King and Savior. Hence, Judas Thaddeus asks why Jesus is revealing himself only to his disciples. Jesus does not answer that question directly. Instead, He continues his work of preparing his disciples for his imminent departure from them by assuring them that he is not leaving them alone. Instead, he is going to live in them along with God his Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promises the abiding presence of the Holy Trinity in his disciples who express their responsive love for him by keeping his commandments, especially his commandment of love, because only this type of loving will open them to his Divine Indwelling. Jesus is referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul renewed by grace. God repeatedly revealed Himself in the Old Testament and promised to dwell in the midst of the people (cf. Exodus 29:45; Ezekiel 37:26-27; etc.). But here Jesus speaks of the presence of God in each person. We are a part of the divine chain of love. God loves man. He sent His Son to prove it. After Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, God the Father continues to live in us with His Son and the Holy Spirit. This abiding God gives us the Father's protection and providence, the Son's redemption and forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit's sanctification and guidance.

Life messages: 1) Let us live in constant awareness of the abiding presence of the Trinitarian God within us and behave well in His presence.

2) During moments of doubts and temptations, let us seek the active guidance and strengthening.

May 5 Tuesday: Jn 14: 27-31a: 27 *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.* 28 *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.* 29 *And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it*

does take place, you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; 31 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.

The context: In his Last Supper discourse, Jesus gives two gifts to his disciples, namely, the gift of peace and the gift of the cross leading to glory. Today's passage refers to the gift of peace. Wishing a person peace (*Shalom*), was, and still is, the usual form of greeting among the Jews and the Arabs. *Shalom* is a right relationship with God and with others. Moses instructed the Israelites to bless others with God's peace: "*The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace*" (Numbers 6:22-26). "Peace be with you!" is the greeting Jesus used, and which the Apostles continued to use. Hence, the Church uses it several times in the liturgy. Peace is one of the great Messianic gifts. St. Paul tells us that it is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Jesus repeats his promise saying, "*My peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you.*" Pope Paul VI said: "True peace must be founded upon justice, upon a sense of the untouchable dignity of man, upon the recognition of an indelible and happy equality between men, upon the basic principle of human brotherhood."

Life message: 1) We are invited to live in the peace wished by Jesus. This requires that we are to be reconciled every day with ourselves, with our neighbors and with our God. Reconciliation with God demands that we repent every day of our sins and ask God's forgiveness. Reconciliation with others demands that we forgive others for their offences against us and that we ask for their forgiveness for our offenses against them in words and deeds.

May 6 Wednesday: John 15: 1-8: 1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 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. 3 You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. 4 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. 5 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. 6 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. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide

in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples:

The context: Jesus uses one of his favorite images, the vine and the branches, during his Last Supper discourse to help his disciples understand the closeness of their relationship with him and the necessity of their maintaining it. Jesus assures them, using the parable of the vine and branches, that the Life-giving Spirit Whom Jesus will send them, will be present and active among his disciples and their successors. This Gospel passage also emphasizes the need for Christians to abide in Christ as an essential condition for producing fruits of kindness, mercy, justice, charity and holiness. Paul further clarified this idea in Colossians 1:18 using another metaphor that Christ is the head and Christians are the different members of the body. Pruning is an essential part of growing fruit-producing branches. In the vineyards in Palestine, dead branches were pruned to save the vine. Fruitless, leafy branches draining life sap from the main trunk were also pruned away leaving only fruit-bearing branches. Jesus tells his apostles that they have already been pruned by the words he has spoken to them. Eventually, they will be pruned of all attachment to the things of this world so that they may be ready to attach themselves to the things of Heaven.

Life messages 1) We need pruning in our Christian life. Pruning by cutting out of our lives everything that is contrary to the spirit of Jesus and renewing our commitment to Christian ideals in our lives every day is the first type of self-imposed pruning expected of us. A second kind of pruning is accomplished by practicing self-control over our evil inclinations, sinful addictions and aberrations. A third type of pruning is allowing Jesus to prune, purify and strengthen us by allowing us to face pain, suffering, contradictions and difficulties, with the courage of our Christian convictions.

2) Let us abide in Christ and let Christ abide in us: Personal and liturgical prayers, frequenting of the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation, daily, meditative reading of the Bible and selfless, loving acts of kindness, mercy and forgiveness enable us to abide in Jesus, the true vine, as fruit-bearing branches.

May 7 Thursday: Jn 15: 9-11: *9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. 10 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. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 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. 16 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. 17 This I command you, to love one another*

The context: During the Last Supper discourse, Jesus teaches his disciples that love is the hallmark and the criterion of Christians. Jesus reminds his disciples that he has chosen them as his friends with a triple mission. First, they are to love others as he has loved them. Second, they are to bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Third, they are to ask God the Father for whatever they need in Jesus' name.

The criteria of Christian love: First, Jesus modifies the Old Testament command from "love your neighbor as you love yourselves" (Leviticus 19: 18) to "love others as I have loved you." This means that our love for others must be unconditional, forgiving and sacrificial. Jesus invites each Christian to be in the inner circle of his friends by obeying his commandments including the new commandment of love. Such friends abide in Jesus, and Jesus abides in them, and their prayers in Jesus' name will be answered promptly by God the Father. We express our love for Christ by obeying his new commandment of love. Jesus further explains that the real source of Christian joy is the certainty that God loves us. We, too, must be ready to express our love for others by our readiness to die for them as Jesus died for us.

Life message: 1) Let us remember that true Christian love is costly and painful because it involves sacrifice on our part when we start loving the unlovable, ungrateful and hostile people with Christ's unconditional, forgiving and sacrificial love. But our Christian call is to love others as Jesus has loved us, and as Jesus loves them.

May 8 Friday: Jn 15: 12-17: 12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 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. 16 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. 17 This I command you, to love one another.

The context: Today's Gospel passage is a part of Jesus' Last Supper discourse. Jesus reminds his disciples that he has chosen them as his friends with a triple mission. First, they are to love others as he has loved them. Second, they are to bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Third, they are to ask God the Father in Jesus' name, for whatever they need.

Jesus modifies the Old Testament command from "*love your neighbor as you love yourselves*" (Leviticus 19: 18) to "*love others as I have loved you.*" This means that our love for others must be unconditional, forgiving and sacrificial. We, too, must be ready to express our love for others by our readiness to die for them as Jesus died for us. Then Jesus explains that the calling to produce fruits, which the Apostles received and which every Christian also receives does not originate in the individual's good desires but in Christ's free choice. Jesus concludes his advice by referring to the effectiveness of prayer offered in his name. That is why the Church usually ends the prayers of the liturgy with the invocation "*Through Jesus Christ our Lord....*"

Life message: 1) Let us remember that true Christian love is costly and painful because it involves sacrifice on our part when we start loving unlovable, ungrateful and hostile people with Christ's unconditional, forgiving and sacrificial love. But our Christian call is to love others as Jesus has loved us, and as Jesus loves them.

May 9 Saturday: Jn 15: 18-21: 18 "*If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* 19 *If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* 20 *Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.'* *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.* 21 *But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me.*

The context: In today's Gospel passage, taken from the Last Supper discourse, Jesus warns his apostles of what they are to expect from a world which ignores God and His teaching. They will be hated and persecuted as Jesus was. But there can be no compromise between Christ's disciples and the followers of the powers of darkness. The term "world" in today's Gospel passage means people who are hostile towards God and opposed to His will. They represent an evil society which "*calls evil good and good evil*" (Isaiah 5:20). Such a society will hate Christ and his teachings because Christian teaching exposes the evil of society and its false and dangerous doctrines. Since the Church Jesus established stands for truth, morality and justice, it does not support the modern "dictatorship of relativism." The modern world hates and ridicules everything Christian through its liberal, agnostic and atheistic media.

Life message: Let us ask the Holy Spirit for the courage of our Christian convictions to believe and practice what Jesus taught and what he continues to teach through his Church