

Easter

May 14, 2006

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (MOTHERS' DAY)

Acts 9:26-31 / 1 Jn 3:18-24 / Jn 15:1-8



INDEXOPEN

"Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit" (John 15:5).

This is the essential message of today's gospel. I've been thinking about what this message means to me as a mother. A mother's children are her most obvious "fruit." There are other significant relationships, perhaps other important work, but children are consuming of her energy. Alongside everything else a mother thinks or does, she is also thinking about and doing for her children. A mother of young children is tempted to feel like this time will never end. It can seem interminable—bottles and diapers; messes and tears; the constant neediness of small children.

This time does end, and we find ourselves the mother of adolescents. Their neediness is greater because they are now in the throes of becoming fruit-bearers themselves. Our job is to help them. Sometimes to water and nurture; sometimes to weed and prune. If toddler-time seems endless, the teenage years are an eternity, for teens are not always appreciative little branches. They talk back and stomp around and pout and point out our every flaw.

MEDITATION

Eventually we become mothers of grown children who rediscover our fine points amidst the flaws. While we may think about our children several times a day, they are no longer our primary fruit. It is to no one's advantage to stay overlong in this part of the vineyard. It can be traumatic when we realize our work of active motherhood is finished and we might be tempted to think our fruit-bearing years are over.

They are never over.

We are allowing the gospels of the Easter season to suggest our Easter "treat"—the complement to the Lenten fast. Perhaps this week our treat might be to embrace whatever stage of life we are in just as it is, trusting that it is in this time and in this place and among these particular people that God will use us. We may feel the prick of the pruning shears from time to time, but the fruit we bear will be all the better for it. Happy Mother's Day.

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Dear Padre

Can Protestants ever receive the sacraments?



INDEXOFEN

Is there ever a time when Protestants are permitted to receive the sacraments in the Catholic Church? I ran into a very nice lady here in our little town, and I think it is a shame that I can't invite her to worship with us.

Dorothy V.

Dear Dorothy,

I suspect you are referring to non-Catholics receiving holy Communion. I hope you will invite your new friend to attend Mass with you, even though she cannot receive Communion. It is an opportunity for you to share your faith and friendship with her. It may be that sharing which will help her become a member of the Catholic Church.

It is never the general practice in the Church to offer the sacraments to non-Catholics. There are some very particular circumstances, however, when some non-Catholics may be offered some sacraments. The circumstance must always include an understanding of the sacrament by the non-Catholic. It is possible, for example, for an Orthodox Christian to receive the sacraments from a Catholic priest when certain conditions exist.

We do not, as a general practice, invite non-Catholics to share Communion with us because the Eucharist is a sign of unity. Obviously, there is not a unity of belief or practice. If we invited them to share Communion, we would be asking them to affirm their belief in Catholic doctrine. We would be giving witness to a unity that does not really exist.

We certainly want all Christians to come together. Jesus came to gather us together and not to push us apart. We all have to work hard for Christian unity so that one day all Christians can share in the one body of Christ as Jesus intended.

Father Joseph Nolen, C.Ss.R.

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The person I have
become is rooted
in her life.*

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READINGS

- Monday • May 15**
Easter Weekday
Acts 14:5-18/Jn 14:21-26
- Tuesday • May 16**
Easter Weekday
Acts 14:19-28/Jn 14:27-31a
- Wednesday • May 17**
Easter Weekday
Acts 15:1-6/Jn 15:1-8
- Thursday • May 18**
Easter Weekday
Acts 15:7-21/Jn 15:9-11
- Friday • May 19**
Easter Weekday
Acts 15:22-31/Jn 15:12-17
- Saturday • May 20**
Easter Weekday
Acts 16:1-10/Jn 15:18-21
- Sunday • May 21**
Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48
1 Jn 4:7-10/Jn 15:9-17

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