

Fifth Sunday of Easter, Cycle B
May 6, 2012

Acts 9:26-31
1 John 3:18-24
John 14: 21-26

Let us recall the first words of our Opening Prayer: “Almighty ever-living God, constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us...” *How can God “constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us?”*

For me, that’s what participation in the mass is all about! However, the more I thought about it, the more confused I became. I was a little encouraged by the first reading: Paul arrives in Jerusalem with a very bad reputation. The leaders stand up for him and he begins three or more journeys of evangelization to Asia Minor and Greece. By sure date his writings to those he evangelized are the first witnesses to the Paschal Mystery.

Nowhere in the New Testament is the phrase “Paschal mystery” used. Especially in St. Paul we can trace an evolution in his thinking, as in his letters he gives pastoral advice in response to developments in the communities he has founded or visited.

We can see elements of the Paschal Mystery in the second reading from First Letter of John. God’s commandment is this, “We should believe in the name of [God’s] son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as [God] 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.”¹

This notion of co-inhering is expressed in today’s Gospel in another way. The context is the Last Supper discourse. The story and its reality: Jesus is the vine, the Father the vine grower. We are the branches of the vine, bearing fruit through the power of the vine sap coursing in the branches. Each branch is pruned, that it may bear more fruit. If it doesn’t it’s gone. To drive home the obvious point, Jesus says, and says to us: “I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in that one, will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”²

Let us return to the question: How can God “constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us?” Answer: by our life of faith, not only in this holy season but in every mass, in every faithful act of ours. To use the metaphor, the faithful branch of the vine keeps the life-giving sap running all the time, by a life of charity. Faithful Christians share the Eucharist, the life-giving participation in the death and resurrection, the dying and rising of the Lord, and his sending of the Holy Spirit. Through faithful living and dying, Christians accomplish the paschal mystery within them.

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¹ 1 John 3:23-24

² John 15:5