

May 21, 2025

# Daily Reflections

*Journeying through Easter*



Center for Spiritual Development

## REMAIN IN ME, AS I REMAIN IN YOU

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### Excerpts from Today's First Reading & Gospel

*When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the Church, as well as by the Apostles and the presbyters, and they reported what God had done with them. But some from the party of the Pharisees who had become believers stood up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the Mosaic law."*

#### **ACTS 15:4-5**

*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....*

#### **JOHN 15:4-5**

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## Reflection

Throughout the Easter season, our hearts have been brightened and our imaginations filled with wonder. We have watched how the struggling company of disciples began to plumb the depths of the resurrection and the endless promise of God's action among them through the Spirit. Love became the mandate for life, family, and church. The missionary journeys throughout the Mediterranean world brought the Gospel to many and varied communities. Yet, even Paul, with all his zeal and wisdom, still dealt with rigidities and ideological biases that to us might seem sadly misplaced.

The Covenant of the Law was gifted to the Hebrews in diaspora from Egypt—a gift based in divine love and graciousness toward a people battered by centuries of domination and enslavement. Jewish social structures were meant to inspire and enrich a spiritual community of those whom God had invited to communion and unity with him and one another. Yet, by the time of Paul's proclamation of the radical freedom of the Christian faithful, a seeming harvest of the first revelation, he was met by a religious extremism that placed the primacy of circumcision as the first validation of those who chose to follow Christ. To our ears it sounds bizarre that people would gather under the banner of the *Party of the Circumcision* (or the *Judaizers* under a more gracious name!).

It would be difficult to imagine a Christian community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century establishing such an absolutist prerequisite for converts! However, we cannot turn a blind eye to our modern equivalents of barriers to inclusiveness by which the members of Christ's family build walls that preclude unity.

John's gospel declares the true foundation of kinship in the communion of Jesus' followers: **I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.** The foundational commandment for each and all is a life grounded in the love which he shared with the community of disciples, and they with those who were to follow. When we choose to transform the Gospel into a profession of ideology of whatever stripe, we set out on an ultimately dangerous path. Each Easter season, we are invited again to embrace and cherish the commandment of love, free and uncluttered by the peculiarities of our own imagination or bias. As so often has occurred throughout the centuries, we are invited (and frequently inspired!) to plumb our capacity to allow the Spirit to birth anew the innocent grace of Jesus' gentle and freeing invitation: **“My commandment is this--Love one another as I have loved you.”**

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## For Pondering

- Do you recognize in yourself particular biases or prejudices in your religious identity that can separate you from others of your faith community?
  - Have you engaged with others in your faith community to promote respect for different perceptions or aspirations among your fellow worshipers?
  - How might you foster the mandate of “Love one another” among those who share your faith and your religious practice?
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