

About the Readings on 4.28.24

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Easter lasts for several more weeks. The three readings continue the unfolding of the meaning of the resurrection: the loving community formed by God's love is depicted with the metaphor of the vine and exemplified in the welcome to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 8:26-40

A pagan eunuch is now baptized and becomes attached to Christ the vine. The Isaiah citation is an image for the death of Christ, in whose name the outsider is baptized and brought into the believing community.

Psalm 22:25-31

In response to the reading about the baptism of the eunuch, we sing Psalm 22:25-31, a lament that like Isaiah 53 became important as background for the Christian telling of Christ's crucifixion. Verses 25-31 conclude the lament with praise, and we can imagine that we are joining with the African eunuch as "all the families of the nations" worship the Lord.

1 John 4:7-21

In the semicontinuous reading of 1 John during Easter B, this excerpt serves well as a commentary on today's gospel from John 15: the love that is shared within the community is like the health of the branches that are all connected to Christ the vine. Life in Christ is communal. To "abide" is to "live within," and so the baptized abide together in the risen Christ.

John 15:1-8

John reinterprets the image of the vineyard, which in the Old Testament is a symbol of either the land itself or of the people Israel, as an image of Christians united together in Christ. A branch that is cut off from the vine withers. The crucified and risen Christ is the strong vine without which we die.