

Spiritually Speaking

Remain in Christ's Love

By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church

On this fifth Sunday of Easter, Jesus tells us that He is the true vine and we the branches. Thus, we must remain in Him if we wish to bear much fruit, as the branches have no existence if they don't remain with the main stem. He is inviting every one of us to remain in His love and prepares everyone to go through the difficulties of life with patience and endurance. As branches crafted on the true vine, we are expected to bear positive and good fruits in Christ.



Fr. Thankachan Joseph

As I was reflecting on the writing of this article, my thoughts turned to the pandemic and especially how in my home country it is very alarming and threatening at the moment. People are in the Indian capital city dying without oxygen. Until a few weeks ago, the situation was rather normal – of course, with the usual ups and downs. Then all of a sudden, we were hit with the second wave of COVID-19. Now the whole country is reeling under the blow of this unforeseen infectious disease. The latest news is that this virus is taking thousands of people's lives daily. There is lot of panic, fear, and anxiety. The Lord Jesus is inviting every one of us to remain/stay with him and have faith. Words like "Do not be afraid," "Fear not," and "Be courageous" appear a few hundred times in the Bible and they are meant for us, to strengthen us and comfort us. As Jesus says, "Fear is useless; what is needed is faith" (Mark 5:36). What is needed is trust in his providence and the surrender of our lives into his hands. In the book of Deuteronomy we read, "There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place." (Deuteronomy 1:31)

The first reading of the day is the part that follows immediately after the call of Saul on his mission to Damascus. In the Book of Acts of the Apostles (9: 26-31), one remarkable thing we see about Paul is that after his dramatic conversion, his life changed completely. Immediately, he was transformed from Saul the persecutor, to Paul the preacher of the good news. He wasted no time in bearing fruit in Christ. This is because, his conversion was true and genuine. The consequence of his true conversion and belief in Jesus Christ was a great harvest of souls which continues today. He bore good fruits, abundant and lasting fruit through his works and charitable deeds, because he was a "deeply crafted and rooted branch" in Christ, the true vine.

The second reading, from the first letter of John (3:18-24), reminds us that: "...our love is not to be just word or mere talk, but something real and active. Only through this can we be certain that we are the children of truth..." John seems to remind us of the saying, "Action speaks louder than words." The word of God transforms us because it is real and active. So, we cannot love God or keep His commandments without concrete works of charity and mercy. Also, we cannot remain in Christ without bearing fruits as a mark of our union with him.

The Gospel of St. John (15:1-8) is a call to strengthen our relationship with Christ in order to continue to live in Him. Through the parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus tries to emphasize the type of relationship that should exist between us and Christ. That is, the relationship between a vine and its branches. No branch can have life or bear fruit on its own, unless it is firmly attached to a tree. Likewise, in our spiritual life and journey as Christians, we cannot do without being firmly attached to Christ the vine, in whose name we were baptized. We are created and called to remain in Christ for a purpose, and this purpose is to bear durable fruits in Him. So, instead of a passive life, "to be in Christ" means to live an active and positive life characterized by charity, peace, holiness, pure reverence and love for God and for our neighbors. In other words, it is possible to bear good fruits in Christ through a good and virtuous life.

If we go through the gospel passage carefully, we come across the invitation of the Lord to stay/remain/abide in him. At least eight times these words occur. That shows the importance of our stay with Him. We need to take this call seriously as we face the situations of uncertainty, the hazardous time of our life, to remain in Him and enjoy the serenity and peace that He offers to the world.

God's constant invitation to us is to keep moving forward in faith with Him, trusting His graces, freeing our own hearts so that we can free the hearts of others. How is my relationship with Christ, the true vine? Am I still living in him? Have I born any good fruit in Christ? Bearing fruit in Christ means growing spiritually and affecting others positively.

We cannot be in Christ for years and still suffer from spiritual lethargy or dwarfism. No, there must be progress in our union with Him. This progress must be expressed in our trust in Him, in our better knowledge of Him, and in our love for Him and for others. The pandemic is an occasion God gives to every one of us to examine one's own life and return to Him. Finally, when like Paul, we become branches of the true vine, Jesus Christ, then with the psalmist, we can confidently sing: "You, Lord are my praise in the great assembly." Alleluia!

Chamber lunch meeting May 6

The next Heppner Chamber of Commerce lunch meeting set for Thursday, May 6, from noon to 1 p.m. will be an "All Entities Reports" with a short presentation from Kalie Davis about the student

internship program that is open to Morrow County businesses.

The luncheon meeting will be held in the Giltiam and Bisbee Building. Lunch expense is \$10, required no later than Tues-

Good News Only

By Doris Brosnan

Another ex-Heppnerite reached out last week. Doris Schaefer Clerf is 93 years old, was raised on the "Freeze-out Ridge Ranch (above Hislers), has been gone from Heppner for 70 years, but still feels connected and continues to receive the Heppner Gazette Times. (She reports that it is newsier than a nearby newspaper.) Doris lives at Kittitas, WA, where a "Clerf Road" runs. Her son now lives on the homestead on which she lived for several years. Kittitas is about nine miles northwest of Ellensburg and only about 300-people larger than her hometown. Laurie Hire has sold her house, so no more inquiries, please.

Good news for fishing enthusiasts: The ODFW fish-tankers have been here to stock some of your favorite fishing spots. But be forewarned that these fish might be especially tired. I base this possibility on the report from a young, unsuccessful fisherman who reported that "They were sleeping."

Willow Creek is up, and its banks are looking soooo much more inviting. Except for a few more pieces of debris, the spaces are lush green and inviting! Kudos to who are responsible for this change.

Sharon Harrison reports their Good News is that "We now have a new patio, thanks to our family – Travis, Tiffany, and Tony – and to kind, hardworking people like Josh and Katie Henricks and Eric Imes, who did the cement work

for our new patio." Also, "Thanks" to Charlie Harrison for the finishing touch. We certainly appreciated everyone. (Inviting space for many enjoyable moments this summer.)

Thoughts of many are turning to coloring up their yards with shrubs, trees, and flowering plants, so we are happy to see plants available at a couple of retailers and pleased that the HHS FFA group are again holding a plant sale, starting tomorrow and lasting through Saturday. The young horticulturalists appreciate community support of their efforts as they learn about planting and caring for the plants, about the business features of the experience, and about the interaction with the public.

We have an opportunity to pose questions on line – via People's Town Hall – to our Senator Ron Wyden this Saturday, starting at 3 p.m. We can tune in by going to www.wyden.senate.gov or by going to the People's Town Hall Facebook page. Haven't seen how long the "town hall" will last, so assume it will last as long as participants ask questions of the senator.

Good things continue to happen around our towns, and we continue to appreciate reading about them. Anyone who has a tidbit is invited to email it to dbrosnan123@gmail.com or to call 541-223-1490 (can leave a message if necessary) or stop me on the street.

As always, hoping some good news comes to everyone reading this.

A View from the Green

Over the Tee Cup

The Willow Creek Ladies enjoyed a cool, sunny day for their Tuesday golf.

Low Gross of the Field was Virginia Grant; Low Net was a tie between Karen Haguewood and Betty Carter; and least Putts was Sharon Harrison,

Low Gross for Flight B was Tiffany Cemet, Low Net was Judy Harris and Least Putts was Pat Edmundson. Low Gross for Flight C was Pat Dougherty, Low Net was Jeanne Creswick and Least Putts was Karen Smith-Griffith.

WCCC Sunday Men's Play

Nine participated on Sunday, April 25, for the Willow Creek Country Club men's play. The results are as follows:

Net: 1st/2nd tie with Steve Marlatt and Gene Orwick, 60; 3rd John Edmundson, 63.

Gross: 1st David Allstott, 67; 2nd Charlie Ferguson, 69; 3rd Dennis Peck, 72

The shootout is the next event on Sunday May 2. This is a two-man event consisting of nine holes

Special Event winners were: Longest Putt on #14, by Flights, A to Virginia Grant, B, to Karen Haguewood, and C to Pat Dougherty. Closest to the Pin, second shot, on #13 was Pat Edmundson.

Surprise awards went to Karen Smith-Griffith and Jeanne Creswick.

The next Tuesday Ladies Golf was held April 27 with tee-off at 10 a.m. Golfers were asked to arrive a half hour before tee-off to get registered to play.

There will be no play on May 9, as we celebrate our mothers. May 15 and 16 is the two-man Quad classic. Josh Coiner is the contact person for this event.

A year without knocking on doors

My name is Kelly Kuenzi. I'm a public communication representative for Jehovah's Witnesses. I cover eastern and central Oregon. I reside in central Oregon. Attached is a short article that our writing team has compiled addressing the suspension of our door-to-door ministry this past year. Also, we continue to meet virtually instead of in our Kingdom Halls. This article will answer some of the questions your readers may have about why they haven't seen us publicly this past year. Please feel free to use it in your publication if you desire. Also, I'm attaching a photo of Trish McCauley, one of those quoted from Oregon.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like us to pursue any other angles that would be of interest to your readers, including interviews from local or national spokesmen. Kind regards, -Kelly L. Kuenzi

In March 2020, some 1.3 million Witnesses in the United States suspended their door-to-door and face-to-face forms of public ministry and moved congregation meetings to video conferencing.

It's now been over a year since Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide adjusted their hallmark methods of sharing comfort and hope from the scriptures due to the pandemic.

For many, the change from ringing doorbells and knocking on doors to making phone calls and writing letters expanded and invigorated their ministry.

"Witnesses have embraced this shift, finding the good in these trying times," said Joseph Castano, who reports a 30 percent increase in the Witnesses' preaching activity in his region of northern Virginia and nearby parts of West Virginia. "In fact, I hear many saying, 'I'm able to do more now.'"

"It has been a very deliberate decision based on two principles: our respect for life and love of neighbor," said Robert Hendriks, U.S. spokesman for Jehovah's Witnesses. "But we are still witnesses and, as such, we must testify about our faith. So, it was inevitable that we would find a way to continue our work."

It was 33 years ago that Trish McCauley of central Oregon dedicated herself to do God's will and was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. She enjoyed spending full days preaching from door to door and conducting in-home Bible studies. Then a health crisis changed her life dramatically. "My energy level was so low, it

took all I had just to use my walker to get to the door," said McCauley.

But during the pandemic, she has regularly participated in virtual ministry groups, making dozens of phone calls and writing letters. "By staying in my own home, I feel less draw on my energy." She said, "I truly enjoy talking with others on the phone and receiving encouragement."

McCauley said after our door-to-door ministry resumes, she won't stop writing letters and calling people. "I feel this is truly a great way to reach people, it's helped me think outside the box."

Robin Kuenzi, also of central Oregon, began her full-time volunteer work nearly 38 years ago. She enjoyed preaching from door to door, conducting in-home Bible studies, and standing at cart displays in city parks.

During the pandemic she had to learn new ways to reach people. "At first I was apprehensive. However, my experience has been overwhelmingly positive. Many express appreciation for the interest shown to them and are clearly relaxed speaking with me on the phone. Some say they prefer it. I feel I have built friendships with several in my community by our phone visits. We talk about the day we can finally meet face to face, when it's safe to do so," she said. "I feel like I have learned new skills that I will continue to use even when we are able to resume the public ministry."

Nearly 51,000 people in the United States last year made a request for a Witness to contact them, either through a local congregation or jw.org, the organization's official website, according to Hendriks. Since the outbreak, the Witnesses have followed up on these requests via letters and phone calls instead of in-person visits.

"Our love for our neighbors is stronger than ever," said Hendriks. "In fact, I think we have needed each other more than ever. We are finding that people are perplexed, stressed, and feeling isolated. Our work has helped many regain a sense of footing – even normalcy – at a very unsettled time."

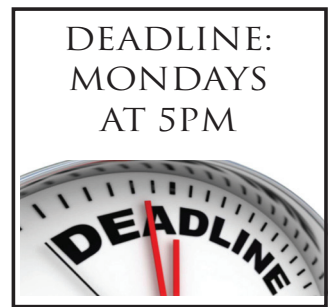
Witnesses have also made a concerted effort to check on distant friends and family—sometimes texting links to Bible-based articles on jw.org that cover timely topics, such as isolation, depression, and how to beat pandemic fatigue.

For more information on the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses, visit their website jw.org, with content available in over 1,000 languages.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE: MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

The Country Rose
Now taking orders for Mother's Day!
541-676-9426

Wedding Tables
Mekayla Kindle & Bailey Haguewood
May 29, 2021
Torri Lovgren & Kyle Nicol
June 12, 2021



Murray's Drug
SINCE 1959
HEPPNER | CONDON | BOARDMAN
217 North Main St., Heppner, OR
Phone 676-9158 Floral 676-9426
murraysdrug.com