

## Fifth Sunday of Easter 2021

My beloved brothers and sisters, as you know, I am fifty- fifty Portuguese and Scottish. I grew up in a Portuguese speaking family. We made our own wine and vinegar from the wine. Grapes were a very important part of our family heritage. I can remember my Grandfather, and my father, trimming the vines every year in the fall. I always seemed to my young eyes that they were going to kill the vine; but no, our vines actually flourished and produced huge harvests. I also remember them putting netting over the vines to protect them from the birds and the hornets, who would come in droves to eat the fruit of the vines.

In the same way, even today, many families in Israel had vines growing over a lattice that formed a porch and in a small vineyard for wine and raisins and fresh fruit. They were integral to the life and health of the family- they still are!

My beloved brothers and sisters, in our world today, worldly forces that are opposed to the good and to the Truth, are constantly trying to influence us by propaganda from the outside. They use every means they can to try to influence our ideas and opinions; they even use intimidation and force! But, it is not that way with our God and our Lord Jesus. Jesus came among us to influence us from the inside out, like the sap which runs through the vine brings life to the entire vine; so too, does the life of God bring life in us and through us to bring us into the fulness of the Divine Life, to make us flourish and grow, to provide life for the world around us!

Jesus does this by uniting us to Himself, first in Baptism and then by the life of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, and then by Holy Communion each week and even every day! He does so also by daily and substantial prayer, especially the Rosary and Adoration, and He does so by our listening to the Divine Truth in the Scriptures, especially the Gospels! He does so, so that the very Divine Life that belongs to the Son of God may run through our veins. He does so, so completely, that like the Grape Vine, we must ask: "Where does the vine stop and the branches begin?"

Furthermore, our Good God does not stop His Divine Work in Jesus in us. He is constantly pruning our lives, enriching the soil of our lives, if we let Him, so that we never stop bearing fruit, but even more so, we bear fruit enough for the whole of the world!

So then, how do we cooperate with Him in this Divine work? By constant prayer, by constant use of the Sacraments, especially Eucharist and Confession, by constant submission of our lives to the pruning of our lives through our union with the cross of Christ, by constant growth in our understanding of Christ and His Gospel by meditating on the Scriptures and learning about the faith of our Church.

If we do these things, our lives will flourish with energy and we become a force of good and light for the dark world in which we live. People will see meaning in our lives and that is our mission!