

APRIL 29, 2018



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



ACTS 9:26–31

PSALM 22:26–27, 28, 30, 31–32

1 JOHN 3:18–24

JOHN 15:1–8

REFLECTION

When I was in fifth grade, I went to Girl Scout camp. I became fast friends with a girl named Beth, and when the week was over, we did what any camp BFFs would do—we exchanged addresses so we could be pen pals. Beth and I faithfully wrote letters to each other for several months. At some point, though, one of us just didn't write back, and our long-distance friendship fizzled out. On my first day of college, I had a floor meeting with everyone who lived in my dorm. A girl directly across the circle from me introduced herself to the group: "Hi, I'm Beth." I did a double take. That Beth? There was no way that it could be true . . . but I just knew it was her! I caught up with her after the meeting as everyone walked outside to go to the cafeteria for dinner. "Hi," I said nervously. "You might not remember me, but I think we went to camp together." She stopped dead in her tracks as a sudden burst of recognition washed over her. "Jessie!" she exclaimed. "Is it really you?" Over the next four years we rekindled our friendship, and we still remain close to this day. Just like any relationship, our friendship takes work to maintain and grow. We get together for dinner on a monthly basis, send each other regular text message check-ins, make sure that we're up-to-date on what's going on in one another's lives, and support each other in difficult times. These connection points help us maintain and strengthen our friendship. "I am the vine, you are the branches," Jesus says in today's Gospel reading. "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit" (v. 5). To be a good friend, *to remain* in someone, means to find ways to stay connected to that person. How do we remain in Christ? We make time for Jesus. We commit to prayer. We learn more about our faith. We ground ourselves in a community of believers. We embrace the sacraments. We "love one another just as he commanded us" (1 John 3:23).

ACTION

How often do we find ourselves saying, "I would pray more, but I just don't have the time"? How often do we say we're "too tired to go to Mass"? An authentic relationship requires an investment of love and time, and our relationship with God is no different. As Christians, this relationship can sustain us, guide us, and help us remember that we are able—and called!—to live out the mission of Jesus' Kingdom way.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

● Who is one of your closest friends? How do you maintain and deepen your friendship with that person? Is this friendship a reflection of your relationship with Christ? If so, how? What can you do to strengthen your relationship with Christ?