



Thursday of the 5th Week of Easter



Date: Thursday, May 22, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Acts 15:7–21

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 96:1–3, 10 | **Response:** Psalm 96:3

Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27

Gospel Reading: John 15:9–11

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

Today's Gospel presents a beautiful but challenging image: Jesus as the true vine, and we, his branches. He tells us plainly, "Remain in me, as I remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine." This call to remain in Jesus's love is not just a spiritual ideal; it has real implications for how we live our lives, especially here in Zambia.

Think about the grapevines in our Zambian countryside. Imagine the smell of the rich earth after the rains, the feel of the sun warming your skin as you walk through the neat rows of vines. A branch severed from that life-giving vine quickly withers and dies. In the same way, when we disconnect from Jesus and from one another, we lose the spiritual nourishment to thrive. The falsehood of our times is to believe we can flourish alone—apart from community, faith, and mutual care. The Gospel reminds us: we grow and bear fruit only together, in community, in the church.

Where is God pruning your life? Where is He removing what holds you back from deeper love and service? It might be a habit that distracts you, a relationship that sows division, or a way of thinking that limits your openness to others. Remember, pruning is not punishment. It is an act of love that allows us to bear more abundant fruit.

This message echoes in Psalm 96, calling us to "proclaim his help day by day," imagining a world where everyone is treated fairly and all nations praise God. Yet, we know the reality here in Zambia—economic hardship, political uncertainty, and social divisions threaten to overwhelm us. Despair, however, is not

from God. Jesus's command to love calls us to build a different Zambia—to stand for justice, to see our neighbours' suffering as our own, and to open our doors rather than close them.

Saint Rita of Cascia provides a powerful example for us today. She lived in a time marked by violence and family strife, much like some of the struggles we face. Even amidst opposition and loss, she remained steadfast in love, seeking reconciliation and peace. She lived Jesus's commandment not just in word but in courageous action, bearing fruit that nourishes the Church even now. She is a saint often connected to peace and thought of as a patron saint of lost causes - especially for those conflicts we currently experience where it seems impossible to get people around the table, as in Ukraine and Russia, or Palestine and Israel. Just as St. Rita sought healing in a fractured community, we too are called to be peacemakers in Zambia, bridging divides and healing wounds.

So, as we prepare to leave this place, let us ask ourselves:

- How do I remain connected to Jesus, the true vine?
- How do I allow God's loving pruning in my life?
- And how do I bear fruit by loving and serving my neighbour, especially in our beloved Zambia?

May we take strength from Jesus's abiding love and the example of saints like Rita. And may our lives reflect the fruit of that love—justice, peace, and mercy—so that our communities may flourish as branches on the vine.

Amen.

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-05may-22-yc-et-05/>

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.