

# 5th Sunday of Easter

Cycle B

May 6, 2012 4pm, 9:30 and 11am  
Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

## The Circle

One of our very early Christian writers proposed an interesting image for understanding our relationship with God and with each other.

He suggests that we imagine a perfect circle, something like this one. The center point is exactly the same distance from all points on the circumference or ring of the circle.

So, every point on the circumference is exactly the same distance from the center. Now make a mark on the ring and imagine that this is you.

Then, make a second mark and imagine that this is someone dear to you – maybe your husband or wife or best friend. And then make a third mark and imagine that this is someone whom you dislike or with whom you have disagreements.

Now draw a line from each of these marks or persons toward the center. As each line moves closer to the center, it also moves closer to all the other lines.

## Explanation of the Circle

The Christian monk who proposed this image explains that the center of the circle is God.

The circle itself is the world and everyone in the world is on the circumference or ring of the circle. So God is equally accessible to everyone.

It is up to us to move as close to God as we can. And, as we do this, we also move closer to one another.

## The Vine and the Branches

This image of the circle helps us to appreciate Jesus' image today of the vine and the branches.

Jesus is like a grapevine, something like the center of the circle. We are the branches on that vine, something like the people on the circumference or ring of the circle.

So Jesus is in the same relationship with all of us. He says that what we need to do is to “*remain*” in him.

In this gospel passage, Jesus uses the word “*remain*” seven times. So this must be a pretty important thing.

For example, Jesus says, “*Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.*”

### 1. Remain

So first, we need to “*remain*” in Jesus.

It is something like the person on the circumference or ring of the circle drawing closer to the center, closer to God. There are a number of things we can do to “*remain*” in Jesus.

For example, receiving Holy Communion, like these children are doing for the first time and like many of us are doing again is a way for God to be in us and us to be in God. This is why it is so valuable to come to Mass every Sunday.

Praying personally on our own is also very important. Dedicating the day to God and asking God’s help when we wake up in the morning, thanking God before we go to bed at night, or just being quiet and aware of God’s presence are really good habits.

These are ways for us to “*remain*” in Jesus and allow him to “*remain*” in us. They are ways to move closer to the center of the circle.

### 2. Bear Fruit

Then, if we “*remain*” in Jesus, we can “*bear fruit*,” like the branches on a grapevine.

Both images – the circle and the grapevine – are consistent in telling us what it means to “*bear fruit*.” They tell us that through God or Jesus, we are connected with one another.

This means that we see ourselves in relation to others, to all of God’s sons and daughters in the world. So, the “*fruit*” that Jesus wants us to bear consists of things like: respect for one another, helping those in need, working for reconciliation and peace, building bridges and seeking common ground between people, things like that.

Our “*remaining*” in Jesus like the branches on the vine, or our drawing closer to God like the center of the circle, makes us close to one another. It makes us aware of how connected we are and it moves us to express this in our attitudes and words and actions.