

Union with God
5th Sunday of Easter
(Jn 15:1-8)

We human beings simply have no earthly idea of how profound a union is achieved with God through Jesus Christ. There is nothing in our human experience to compare.

The deepest union in our human experience is the blood ties of our family bonds. When a man and woman unite in marriage, their union becomes a new person. In their child, mother and father are perfectly united: each of them is able to see the reflection of their own face in that of the baby: it has his mother's eyes, his father's nose, etc.

Human bonds of love are very deep, whether between spouses, friends, brother/sister, parent/child. When we love each other, we possess one another; our hearts belong to each other. It is a real union. Somehow, through love we have mysteriously become "part" of each other, because should the beloved leave, or be away, or die, we experience grief. Something within our own heart is torn.

But when it comes to our relationship with God, these human bonds are only a faint reflection of the union we have with Him. As human beings we in some sense "possess" each other, or "dwell within" each other, but it is never perfect. After all, we never become "one-in-being" with each other. No matter how long a couple may be married and become completely "one" with each other, they will always remain to distinct beings.

But when God loves—when the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father—their union is so complete, their mutual "in-dwelling" so complete, that they are, quite accurately and literally, "*Consubstantial*," as we say in the Creed. They have one singular existence, one mind, one "heart," one will. The only thing different between Father and Son is that the Father is not the Son, and vice-versa. The persons of the Holy Trinity can only be distinguished by their relationship. They cannot be distinguished by will, intellect, desire, intention, not even by being itself. As I said, we have no earthly concept of the union known and experienced by Father and Son.¹

Now here is the mystery for us: by baptism we are brought into this communion of Father and Son and Holy Spirit by becoming one with the Son. By means of the sacred humanity of Christ, we enter that circle of Divinity as sons

¹ Their union is so total and profound and perfect, that their union itself is a divine Person: the Holy Spirit, "breathed forth" or "spirated" by their love. The "one" which the "two" become in their union of love is the "third" whose presence widens the union of love into a sharing of love. And man is made in this image

with the Son, who with Him know the Father as our “Father,” and dare to call upon Him as such.

By means of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is able to accomplish what we cannot even begin to imagine and which transcends everything human and mortal. Yet, it is for this that we were originally created, and it is for this we long: total and complete union with God in love: He in us, and us in Him, completely.

“Live on in me, as I do in you.” When Jesus tells us *“I am the vine, you are the branches,”* he is describing this relationship in literal terms. Baptism grafts us into the life of Jesus, so that from that moment we live not just a human life with human breath and blood, but the divine and eternal life of God. Through baptism we begin to breathe with divine breath, that is to say, the Spirit. And as Archbishop Fulton Sheen would say, Christians live with *divine blood* flowing through their human veins—the very Blood of Christ.²

In the image of the vine and branches, Jesus graphically illustrates the sacramental life of the Church. By the Resurrection, Jesus accomplishes for us the new life of grace: his own life. Through the Sacraments, this eternal life is communicated. Let us recognize the new union that has been established between God and man in Christ, deeper than the blood ties of our own family, and let us live it; us in him, he in us, we together in the Father.

² “Breath” and “spirit” are an identical concept biblically; likewise, “blood” and “life” are identical conceptually.