



Week Leading up to 5.2.21: Remain In Me

***(Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.)**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: Jn 15:1-8

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Jesus, teach us and guide us to remain in you and recall often that we are being loved into existence at this very moment. May we know deep within that all the good we do, and love we give, is a result of being connected to You just as a branch is connected to the vine. In Your Holy Name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

In the reading today we hear Jesus say, "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. Can you think of a specific time you saw that remaining in Christ bore fruit?

YouTube Video: How to Practice the Presence of Christ with Fr. Schmitz (7:25)

<https://youtu.be/XTfPd2xl6IU>

Reflection or Discussion Questions: {Leaders: We have incorporated a couple of questions to allow participants to reflect on how ESG has impacted their lives. Please mention this prior to the discussion.}

2. Reflecting on the Gospel and Fr. Mike's video, how do you think "the pruning" can relate to remaining present in Christ? How have you seen pruning bring about fruitfulness in your own life?
3. Fr. Mike mentioned that remaining in Christ is as simple as asking him to come with you (even in mundane tasks and typical life). Has there been a time in your life when you did this? How would or could your day be different if you ask God to be with you in each moment?
4. Fr. Schmitz shares that the awareness of the presence of God takes practice. Have you found that ESG has helped you practice being more aware of God's presence? If so, how so?
5. Has there been anything specific from a past ESG meeting that has helped you become more aware of God's presence? Has your awareness of God changed how you view others in any way?
6. How has your participation in ESG reshaped your understanding of God and Church?
7. What are some practical things you have done or could do to maintain a mindfulness of Christ's omnipresence (always being there)?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or all}

- Do your best to PRACTICE the presence of God throughout each day (i.e. inviting God to join you every time you move rooms, start a new task, leave the house, pick up your phone, etc.).
- With a childlike curiosity, take 10 or more minutes of prayer and reflection while closely examining a plant (its vine and branches, stem and leaves, fruit, etc.). How does the examination of this plant deepen your reflection on the vine and branches example used by Jesus?

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) We thank You, Jesus, that You are the Vine and we are the branches. Help us day by day to abide in You and to be fruitful in all we say and do. We know that without You we can do nothing, but we also know that as we rest in You we can bring forth the sort of fruit that is pleasing to the Father. We want to abide in You and rest in You and remain in You. Help us, Jesus, we pray in Your great name. Amen.

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: Acts 9:26-31; Sunday Reading 2: 1 Jn 3:18-24