IT IS ONE of the most ancient traditions of the Catholic Church that catechumens are baptized and converts received into full communion at Easter. Lent is the final stage of preparation for a convert’s sacramental initiation into the mystery of Christ. At Easter, as the new life of the resurrection floods into His Mystical Body the Church, more souls are added to that Body, for God’s greater glory, and their own salvation.

In this country, each year, thousands of baptized Christians seek full communion with the Catholic Church. Every soul is unique, and on the human level each individual may have their own personal reasons for coming to such a decision. However, behind and above all human decisions lies the inscrutable wisdom of God’s omniscience, and the unfathomable mercies of our individual predestination (yes, there is a Catholic doctrine of predestination, though often neglected). God never forces a conversion, but generously chooses those to whom He will offer any particular grace at any particular moment in their life.

It does seem to be the case that at this time God is offering the grace of seeking full unity with the Apostolic See to more and more individuals. We see this beautifully exemplified in the development of the new Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham established in England and Wales by the Holy Father, for those who were once Anglicans and then became Catholics. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they have been given the grace to discover the traditional doctrine proclaimed again by the most recent Council of the Church, and reiterated in the most recent Catechism:

The sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic...subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 870)

In the same cause of Christian Unity it is very encouraging that another similar Ordinariate has now been established in the USA. We must pray that more and more souls may be drawn to it. We must also be sure that we understand the grace that is being offered them. In many cases, those who seek full communion with the Holy See have already been devout practising Christians for many years. Does this mean that they have to renounce all the graces that God gave them while they were still outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church? By no means. Again, the Catechism makes the situation clear. The same paragraph just quoted (n. 870) adds:
... many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its [the Church's] visible confines.” When God calls someone into full communion with the Church Christ founded, He is offering them in all its fullness what they have already possessed, we would say, partially. God completes, but does not undermine. He does not revoke His earlier call, but perfects it with a new and better call. One of the sermons of Blessed John Henry Newman is apposite here; “…we are not called once only, but many times, all through our life Christ is calling us. He called us first in baptism; but afterwards also; whether we obey His voice or not, He graciously calls us still. Even if we fall from our baptism, He calls us from grace to grace, and from holiness to holiness, while life is given us.”

For so many years now we have been praying for the unity of Christians in England. The fact that it seems to be coming about in away we might not have envisaged does not mean it is not the work of God. It means that the Father’s ways of achieving all the intentions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus easily surpass our limited imaginations and our imperfect prayers.

Once John Henry Newman had become a Catholic in 1845, his mind was clearer than it had ever been before on this subject. Here is the prayer for Unity which as a Catholic he himself composed and prayed:

O Lord Jesus Christ, who when Thou wast about to suffer didst pray for Thy disciples to the end of time that they might all be one, as Thou art in the Father and the Father in Thee, look down in pity on the manifold divisions among those who profess Thy faith and heal the many wounds which the pride of man and the craft of Satan have inflicted on Thy people.

Break down the walls of separation which divide one party and denomination of Christians from another. Look with compassion on the souls who have been born in one or other of these communions, which not Thou, but man, hath made.

Set free the prisoners from these unauthorised forms of worship, and bring them all to the one communion which Thou didst set up at the beginning—the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Teach all men that the See of Peter, the Holy Church of Rome, is the foundation, centre, and instrument of Unity. Open their hearts to the long forgotten truth that the Holy Father, the Pope, is Thy Vicar and representative; and that in obeying him in matters of religion they are obeying Thee, so that as there is but one company in heaven above, so likewise there may be one communion, confessing and glorifying Thy holy Name, here below. Amen

The Provost

This is an excerpt of an article published in the February, 2012 (Vol 89, No. 1089) issue of The Oratory Magazine, the parish paper of the Brompton (London) Oratory.

OUR PATRON SAINT

SAINT ATHANASIUS lived nearly three quarter of the years of the critical fourth century. It was a crucial time for the Catholic Church, a time when the Roman Empire passed from official paganism to the public recognition of the Church. Because of that transition Christianity became popular. This popularity resulted in a period of great and widespread hetero-orthodoxy. One way to understand hetero-orthodoxy is that it looks nice! But it isn’t. It was the personality and brilliance of Saint Athanasius that worked the change that secured Christian right belief. Athanasius almost single-handedly took the hetero out of hetero-orthodoxy!

When Athanasius was a young man there were many ideas floating around in regard to the person of Christ. Once Christianity was established as not only a legally permitted religion but *the official religion* of the empire, speculation was rampant. The various schools of thought centered in major cities as localities of Christian philosophy. There was a number one question in the fourth century church world. Was there a time when Christ did not exist? Or was Christ eternally with the Father? Human nature being what it is, (and made up more of administrators than thinkers), many in the Church, along with successive emperors, argued there should be room for various opinions! On the other side of the issue was Athanasius.
By the end of Saint Athanasius’ long life, and the fourth century; two general councils of the Church had defined the nature of Christ. They said that one point of view and only one was to be accepted as true: that Christ is “only begotten, of the substance of the Father.” Every time we recite the Nicene Creed at Mass and say “of one substance with the Father” we are declaring that Saint Athanasius was right.

Ever since Athanasius, the Christian asserts with the great saint that the divine nature of Our Lord Jesus can be described in terms that might be used only for God Himself. Like Athanasius we assert that whenever we listen to the words of Christ we are hearing the words of God. Whenever we read the deeds of Christ we read of the works of God. Whenever we see the face of Christ we behold the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And there can be no other Christianity than that.

In a memorable phrase Winston Churchill praised the fliers in the Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain in 1940. He said, “Never in our history has so much been owed by so many to so few.” Holy Church could say that about one man. The entire Roman world, (what we call “the ancient civilized world”) which has bequeathed so much to us in the way of math and science, literature, and drama, and law, was essentially pagan when Athanasius was born. Not only was it Christian but Catholic, at his death. Holy Athanasius, pray for us.

Father Bradford

This is an abridged version of a sermon first preached in 1997 and published in its entirety in the May 2006 issue of Contra Mundum. His feast day is May 2nd, a Monday this year.

ASCENSION DAY

Holy Day of Obligation

Vigil Mass
Wednesday, May 4, 2016
Procession, Solemn Mass & Sermon
7:30 P.M.

SHORT NOTES

★ There is Anglican Use Mass every Saturday at 8 A.M. in St Theresa’s Church, West Roxbury. May 7th is a year’s-mind Mass for Abbot Gabriel Gibbs, OSB.

★ May 8th is Mother’s Day.


★ Bishop Richard Lennon became Bishop of Cleveland on May 15th in 2006. He was our first chaplain.

★ Our next service of Solemn Evensong & Benediction is Trinity Sunday, May 22nd. Service time is 5:00 P.M.

★ Thanks to Judie Bradford for providing a luncheon served prior to our parish meeting on Sunday, April 10th.

★ In May we will bid adieu and God speed to parishioner Eva Murphy who is moving back to her native Florida to be near her mother and family. Eva has been a long-time Boston resident and will be missed by many people here.

FUNDRAISER

‖ Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Philip Crotty, we have a challenge grant designed to help remove the year-end debt we incurred last year. Every dollar contributed will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to a maximum of $5,000. The offer is for monies donated in addition to our regular pledged giving, so please earmark your gifts “challenge grant.” The offer expires in six months, which will be October 10, 2016.
TODAY’S GOSPEL is the beautiful parable of the Vine and Its branches. The parable was probably spoken by Christ in the Temple, after the Last Supper, and on the way to Gethsemane. And it is likely that the disciples were looking at the great golden vine with clusters of grapes that crowned the portal of the Temple porch. The golden vine, you see, was a recognized symbol of Israel.

Jesus said “I am the Vine.” He was plainly declaring, “I am Israel.” The purpose of God entrusted to Israel, and of which the Old Covenant is the historic record, is in fact being fulfilled in Christ. He is the true Israel, the Faithful Remnant, and, in His Own Person, is the whole people of God.

The culminating inspiration of the Old Testament was that declared in Isaiah 53, that the perfect response by Israel to Almighty God will be given, and the divine purpose fulfilled, **by one individual.** The whole significance of Israel would be concentrated in Him. “I am the Vine” was ringing in the ears of our Christian forebears when they knew it was no accident that Christ came out of Egypt (Mt 2:15) in fulfillment of the Psalm “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt.” (Ps 80:8).

Christ is the Vine. He does not say He is simply the **stem.** He is the **entire plant.** Christ includes in Himself every tiny shoot and each new graft. And that is where we come in to the picture. For there have been many explanations about our relationship to Christ and each other, and many explanations about the themes of free will and destiny or fate; but none of them goes to the heart of the matter in a more vivid and understandable way than given us in those few minutes on the path from the Cenacle to Gethsemane, when Our Lord Jesus gave us this parable. It is as if the natural laws of botany are a mirror reflection of the higher or supernatural bond between Christ and His Church.

I do not need to regale you with my limited knowledge of botany! It has been a long time since textbooks in biology collected dust on my bookshelves. But like many of you, I do a bit of work in the garden. And so I appeal to what we all know.

A branch of a vine has a certain freedom of movement. It can sway in the wind; it produces leaves; it can grow in a certain direction. And it also has a duty to share its products, photosynthesis, with the rest of the vine. The branch also receives from the vine food and physical support. If the branch did not participate in the life of the vine it would die. The month of May in Boston is the time of year when we are bundling up sticks and dead branches and putting them at the curb for Saturday pick-up. We know that the branch is totally dependent upon the vine for its well-being and that the vine is not dependent upon the branch to nearly the same degree.

To the casual eye, the branch accomplishes many things seemingly on its own. But the careful eye sees that all these accomplishments, the flowers, the new leaves, the fruit, would be impossible without the support system of the vine.

Finally, we see that the branch has a certain amount of autonomy or free will, but that this comes about by being incorporated into the vine. Sticks lying on the ground cannot wave in the breeze. Being incorporated in the vine makes free will possible; and perhaps this helps us know that being true to our destiny, which is incorporation in Christ, undergirds and brings about the free will that we enjoy.

If Our Lord Jesus had been using our vocabulary, He might say, “I am the larger life system of which you are a part.” But no concept is more clear and enduring than His parable of the vine, a parable we can see acted out in nature in first century Palestine, and along the shores of Lake Ontario in New York State, and in the magnificent Wachau Valley in Austria this time of year, and even in our own back yards.

Those who are bound to Christ realize that their lives are continuous with His Own, and that we are bound by higher natural laws of being
and love. We respond by striving to do certain things He asks of us and by striving with His grace to avoid certain other things. And we act this way because we are aware of our connection to Him. And as God gives us the light, and with His grace sustaining and nourishing us, inspiring determined acts of our will, each one of us exercises free will in a conscious response, trying to serve and support the whole Body of Christ. And in this way, just like the branch of the vine, you are a part of the larger whole, yet nevertheless your relationship with Christ is not duplicated anywhere else; and you are a precious individual in His eyes, now and for ever.

Father Bradford

¶ The sermon for the Fifth Sunday of Easter was preached on May 21, 2000.

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD

IT IS NOT always easy for us to keep the right balance between Mary’s exaltation and her submission. Yet Mary’s own hymn, the Magnificat, gives perfect expression to both. She is still now, as she was then, the handmaid of the Lord, but a “handmaid” to whom he has done great things, hence all generations shall call her blessed. She is handmaid, because no creature can stand in another relationship to the sovereign majesty of God; but this same God has done such great things in her and has given her so many graces, because he has made her the mother of his only, co-equal Son, that, as Saint Thomas Aquinas said, she is raised to an almost infinite dignity, because it derives from the infinite God himself who has taken flesh in her.

Hilda Graef

¶ The author (1907–1970) was of German, Jewish, and Protestant background before her conversion as a young woman. Her guides to Catholicism were St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, and G.K. Chesterton.

This paragraph is an excerpt from Day by Day with Mary, published in 2001 by Augustinian Press, Villanova, PA.

MARY’S MONTH

YOU ALL KNOW about the merry month of May. It is actually the Mary Month of May and was Mary’s month long before the florists and greeting card people invented Mother’s Day. Recommended special intentions for your prayers this month:

May 1-7 for all girls and young women
May 8-14 for mothers and grandmothers
May 15-21 for expectant mothers
May 22-31 for working women and Christian witness among women

We pay special honor to the Blessed Virgin because she is the Mother of God, and our Mother. God has exalted her above all other creatures. Her intercession is more powerful with God than that of any other saint. No man refuses his mother a favor; so God does not refuse any request of Mary. Christ even worked His first miracle in advance of His time, because Mary asked Him. Let us all love and honor the Blessed Virgin, for she is our Mother, whom Christ Himself gave us from the cross.

THE SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

Sunday, May 15, 2016
Procession, Solemn Mass & Sermon
Epistle read in foreign languages
11:30 a.m.

Wear RED to Mass!

MAY CROWNING

Monday, May 16, 2016
7:00 p.m.
Saint Theresa of Avila Church, West Roxbury

Our summer flower chart will be posted on May 29th. Sign up for altar flowers for Sundays during the summer months.
stoned once and left for dead; he suffered every persecution men can inflict, his body was twisted by pain and toil. And all this was his lot not just on one of two occasions, for he writes: We are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may be revealed in us.

in all these tribulations he does not murmur or complain about God, as weaker men do. He is not saddened as those who love status and pleasure are. He does not beg God to be relieved of them, as men do who are unaware of their true value and therefore will have no part of them. He does not make light of them, as men do who set little value upon them. On the contrary, fully aware of the value of these tribulations and rising above his own weakness, Paul blesses God amid his sufferings and thanks him as though he had bestowed a fine reward. He thinks it an honor to be able to suffer for him who subjected himself to so very much shame in order to free us from the dreadful effects of sin; who exalted us by giving us his Spirit and making us adopted sons of God; and who gave us, in his own person and through his own efforts, a proof and pledge of heavenly joy.

Dear brothers and sisters, I pray God may open your eyes and let you see what hidden treasures he bestows on us in the trials from which the world thinks only to flee. Shame turns into honor when we seek God’s glory. Present affliction becomes the source of heavenly glory. To those who suffer wounds in fighting his battles God opens his arms in loving, tender friendship, which is more delightful by far than anything our earthly efforts might produce. If we have any sense, we shall yearn for these open arms of God. Can anyone but a man in whom all desire is dead fail to desire him who is wholly lovable, wholly desirable?

If you long for these festivals of heavenly joy, if you want to behold them and take part in them, be assured that there is no better way to reach them than the way of suffering. This is the way Christ and his disciples have always traveled. He calls it a narrow way, but it leads straight to life. That is why he tells...
us that if want to join him, we shall travel the way he took. It is surely not right that the Son of God should go his way on the path of shame while the sons of men walk the way of worldly honor: The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant greater than his master.

God grant that our hearts may find no rest and seek no other food in this world, save in hardship and suffering beside the Lord’s cross.

St. John of Avila

St. John (1499–1569) was a Spanish priest and mystic. He had an extensive ministry in Andalusia. He is a Doctor of the Church. Feast day is May 10th, a Tuesday this year.

A PRAYER FOR MOTHERS

Lord Jesus Christ, who wast born of a human mother and didst care for her upon the cross: We commend to thee the mothers of our nation. May their children be nurtured in thy discipline and instruction, and their home be a haven of peace and love, made fragrant with thy presence; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit ever livest and reignest, one God, world without end.

John R.W. Stott

Dr Stott (1921–2011) was an Anglican cleric and leader of the worldwide Evangelical movement. Time magazine once counted him among the 100 most influential people in the world. He spent most of his life and ministry at All Souls Church, Langham Place, London.

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius

The Revd. Richard Sterling Bradford, Chaplain
Saint Lawrence Church
774 Boylston Ave.
Chestnut Hill, Mass.
(Parking lot behind church.)

Sundays 11:30 a.m.
Sung Mass
Fellowship and Coffee in the Undercroft after Mass

Rectory:
767 West Roxbury Pkwy.
Boston, MA 02132-2121
Tel/Fax: (617) 325-5232
http://www.locutor.net

On Memorial Day, Monday, May 30, 2016 Masses will be offered at 10:00am in both St. Joseph’s and Mt. Benedict Cemeteries by the clergy of St. Theresa of Avila Parish, West Roxbury.

Memorial Days

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, in whose hands are the living and the dead; We give thee thanks for all those thy servants who have laid down their lives in the service of our country. Grant to them thy mercy and the light of thy presence, that the good work which thou hast begun in them may be perfected; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Amen.
St. Lawrence Church, 774 Boylston Street (Route 9).
Park in the church parking lot behind the Church, off of Reservoir Rd.
Directions by Car: From the North or South: Route 128 to Route 9. At signal for Reservoir Road, take right; Church parking lot is a short distance on left.
From Boston: From Stuart/Kneeland St., turn left onto Park Plaza. Drive for 0.2 miles. Park Plaza becomes St James Avenue. Drive for 0.3 miles. Turn slight left onto ramp. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Route-9. Drive for 3.5 miles. Turn left onto Heath Street. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Reservoir Road. Drive for 0.1 miles. Parking lot is on your right.
Directions by Public Transportation: From Kenmore Square station board Bus #60, which stops in front of the Church. Alternatively, the Church is a 15-minute walk from the Cleveland Circle station on the Green Line C-branch.