

From the Fathers:

From a sermon by St Maximus of Turin, Bishop (380 – c.423)

The light of Christ is an endless day that knows no night. Christ is this day, says the Apostle; such is the meaning of his words: Night is almost over; day is at hand! He tells us that night is almost over, not that it is about to fall. By this we are meant to understand that the coming of Christ's light puts Satan's darkness to flight, leaving no place for any shadow of sin. His everlasting radiance dispels the dark clouds of the past and checks the hidden growth of vice. The Son is that day to whom the day, which is the Father, communicates the mystery of his divinity. He is the day who says through the mouth of Solomon: I have caused an unfailing light to rise in heaven. And as in heaven no night can follow day, so no sin can overshadow the justice of Christ. The celestial day is perpetually bright and shining with brilliant light; clouds can never darken its skies. In the same way, the light of Christ is eternally glowing with luminous radiance and can never be extinguished by the darkness of sin. This is why John the evangelist says: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to overpower it. And so, my brothers, each of us ought surely to rejoice on this holy day!

The Easter Garden

The modern Easter garden probably has its origins in the medieval custom of the Easter Sepulchre: on Good Friday the Blessed Sacrament was ceremonially 'buried' in a 'Sepulchre' and raised in triumph on Easter morning. The custom was especially popular in England, where the Sepulchre often became an architectural feature of the church: an elaborately carved stone niche, often with scenes of the Easter story, found near the church's high altar. Many such sepulchres can still be seen, especially in East Anglia. The modern Easter garden, which like the Easter Sepulchre is often a focus of devotion and prayer, nearly always includes three features: a mound with (usually) three wooden crosses to represent Calvary; a structure, often with a stone rolled away to suggest the empty tomb; and lots of flowers and greenery. Sometimes figures of the risen Lord, the angel and the women, are also included.

28th April 2024

Fifth Sunday of Easter



'I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me with me in him, bears fruit in plenty.' In the Fourth Gospel the Lord often uses the word 'abide' to describe both his relationship with his heavenly Father, and his closeness with those whom he has called to himself, the Church. Abide expresses an intimacy of relationship, a closeness that is quite so close as to be not merely a 'living with' or 'alongside' someone, but – radically! – a living within them, an 'in-dwelling.' St John's telling of the Gospel explores deeply this theme of in-dwelling. In today's Mass we hear that it is only in and through this intimate in-dwelling that we can 'bear fruit'. The Gospel's wonderfully earthy and organic language speaks to us of growing, maturation, a coming over time to fruitfulness. It speaks of and proclaims fecundity! Our life in Christ is a life of nothing less than our active participation in Christ, participation in him who is the source and ground and glory of our faith, participation in the Word made flesh, a participation in the one who is the fulfilment of all God's salvific intent. Participation in Christ makes holy our lives, directs our works, and draws us ever onward, ever upward, to the perfection of life we call salvation, the life that is eternal. To strengthen us in this life of active and dynamic participation in Christ, the Lord has given himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of his Body and Blood, the sacrament of his in-dwelling, to which sacrament day-by-day and week-on-week we must return for life-giving nourishment.

Today's Gospel: St John 15:1-8