5th Sunday of Easter:

'Growing Your Faith' here at St Pius X Parish

First reading: Someone might need a little encouragement (Acts 9:26-31)

"When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So, Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. (Acts 9:26-31)

Lesson: Saul had a terrible reputation with Christians – he witnessed and approved the stoning of Stephen. Barnabas was a Jewish convert, though called an apostle but he was not among the original twelve. Barnabas was one of the most quietly influential disciples in the early days of Christianity. In today's reading, Barnabas became a bridge between Saul and the apostles. New disciples need sponsors, people who will come alongside them, to encourage, to teach, to guide, and to introduce them to other disciples in the church. There is always someone who might need a little encouragement. St Pius X church has so many 'Barnabas' in our midst (past and present), these are people who support, guide, help, pray for, and encourage others on their journey to 'abide and remain in Christ'. Together we can grow our Catholic faith, and then bear much fruit.

The Vine and the Branches (John 15: 1-8)

"***Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me". (John 15: 4)***

In the gospel text for this Sunday **(John 15: 1-8)**, "remain in me, abide in me, or abide in my love" appears more than eight times. Christ appears to be very strong in his calls to abide/remain in him. What does it mean to "remain in Christ"?

To 'remain in Christ' means believing that Christ is God, receiving Christ's nourishments (His words and the sacraments), living the life Christ wants, and relating in love to the community of disciples of Christ, that is, the body of Christ (John 15:12). Many people try to be honest people who do what is right. But Christ says that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to him, like a branch attached to the vine. Apart from Christ, our efforts are spiritually unfruitful. This is a call to connect with Christ in our daily lives and to connect with one another in love. ***Prayer and active participation are needed for us to abide/remain in Christ.***

This week is 'Grow your faith': Strengthen your faith and grow your connection with God and the St. Pius X Church community. St. Pius X Parish provides a variety of communication tools to help spread the message of the Gospel and to assist the various ministries and groups in our parish in their efforts to share information and news with the community. These tools include Formed,

Flocknote, Digital Donation, name tags, Facebook/Instagram, and our church bulletin and website. Collect a seed from one of the Parish Life Commission ministers, plant it at home, and let it grow. **Grow your faith.** We have a flyer with all the QR codes with an explanation on it.

Members of our Council of Elders will assist anyone interested to enroll, sign up for Flocknote, connect to our parish's Facebook and Instagram pages; and check out our website. They will also help you register for Ministry Scheduler Pro, sign up for Formed, and show you how to donate online if you choose. This is very important because as disciples we need to 'Grow our faith' together! Registration and participation ensure that you are being fed in your faith, receive church communications, and become well-informed.

The mandate of Christ is, our Christian goal, this is also Bishop Jeff's mission for the diocese, '***go and make disciples'*** of other people. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20).

Thank you and have a wonderful Sunday.
Fr Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP.