

29<sup>th</sup> April 2018 (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

Acts 9:26-31; Psalm 21(22):26-28,30-32; 1 John 3:18-24; John 15:1-8.

### **It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit!**

In today's gospel Jesus presents us with two short parables: the first parable speaks of himself as being the vine and God the Father the vinedresser. The second parable speaks of Jesus as the vine and we the branches. This is an extended metaphor to deliver Jesus' message; there is only one way for us to produce fruit, by living the life Jesus gives us.

If we look at the metaphor itself we know that the purpose of the vine is to give fruit, first class grapes which produce high quality wine. Wine has always been an important part of the social and cultural life of the Jews; vines and vineyards became an important figure of speech. In the Old Testament the People of God is the vine and vineyard of the Lord.

For a vine to produce good fruit it needs to be carefully pruned and cleaned (in the Greek language the words for pruning and cleaning are related because they come from the same root). A vine is cleaned by removing dead branches that no longer have any life in them, and by cleaning the branches that are bearing fruit, encouraging them to be more fruitful.

To produce good fruit a branch needs to be completely connected to or immersed in the vine. If a branch were to cut itself off from the vine, it could not survive, does not produce fruit and it dies. Dead and useless fruitless branches drain the energy of the vine and it is important that they are removed and destroyed, so they are not in the way.

Although pruning carries with it a notion of cutting away, which we may associate with pain, it is actually a healthy and necessary exercise. A branch that is pruned is cleaned of useless growth and encouraged to produce good healthy fruit. Through Jesus, God's Word, the Father cleans us, the branches so that we can continue to produce fruit. Jesus tells us that we are clean already because of the Word that we have accepted in our life.

Pruning is a continuous and time consuming process. As the branches grow and produce fruit, the vinedresser needs to come and make sure the branches are healthy. We need to ensure that we remain deeply embedded in the life of Jesus and of the Father. We cannot decide that we have produced enough fruit and therefore can have a rest, because any branch that stops producing fruit becomes a useless hindrance to the vine, and needs to be destroyed.

The life of the Father and of the Son is the Holy Spirit which the Church receives at Pentecost and that we receive in our Baptism and each time we celebrate one of the sacraments. This Spirit of God within us helps us remain open to the Word of God that we have received, to continue listening to it and accept it, so that we can produce fruit. Thus we glorify God with our lives.

Our constant call is to live the life of God, to listen to and accept the words of Jesus and become his disciples, and thus glorifying God.

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