



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

## May 2, 2021 Fifth Sunday of Easter

Jesus most of the time draw our attention to nature and use it to teach his message. We can see in today's scripture when Jesus looked out at the vineyard and the work of the vinedresser it spoke to him about God his Father, about the relationship between himself and his followers and the relationship with each other among his followers. Jesus saw himself as the vine, his Father as the vinedresser and his disciples as the branches on the vine. He recognized from the work of the vinedresser that some form of pruning is often necessary if our lives as his disciples are to bear all the fruit that we are capable of bearing.

We know from our own experiences that change, growth and new life in our lives do not happen in a vacuum. Times of new growth are often preceded by some kind of pruning experience, times of struggle, times when we feel unsettled, times of personal loss and disappointment. Then conversion happens and by faith we experience growth and change. We often come out of something that is difficult in our lives, something that has not worked out the way we thought it should, something we discover in ourselves that is not as kind or as generous and wholesome as we might imagine ourselves to be. It is often in these moments that when we find ourselves unsettled, confused, and disturbed that we begin to search for something more. Looking for greener pastures? We become interested in what we think might give us a better life; we make decisions that point to a new life giving direction, wrong decisions that we would never have made when all is going well. When our hearts are troubled about something, we then turn to Jesus, and are more open to hearing God's voice. When we find ourselves being painfully pruned in some way or another, we can actually be on the threshold of new life in faith and deepening of our relationship with the Lord, a way of life that bears richer fruit, like the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Every gardener knows it is normal for a vine to be pruned. There is nothing magical about the work of pruning. It is just that what is necessary for the life of a healthy vine, because there is always some part of the vine that needs pruning. So it is with our own lives, there is always a time in which something in us needs to be pruned, if we are to become all that God is calling us to be. Sometimes what needs to be pruned in our lives, for example, is a vice towards self-interest or elitism that draws life away from the vine as a whole in community. The image of the vine is a very communal image of the church; Jesus tells us, that we are completely interconnected and interdependent. We have to place the strength of the entire vine before our own individual desires and want. Even more fundamentally than our dependence on each other as church, is the image of the vine. It encourages our dependence on the Lord. 'Cut off from me you can do nothing', Jesus says.

That is why in the gospel reading today, the language of pruning gives way to the language of remaining or abiding in God's love. The branches must remain united to the vine to bear fruit. Our remaining in Jesus, our adhering closely to him, becomes the core of our lives as Christians. Our responsorial psalm directs us by its words; "I will praise you, Lord, (together) in the assembly of your people."