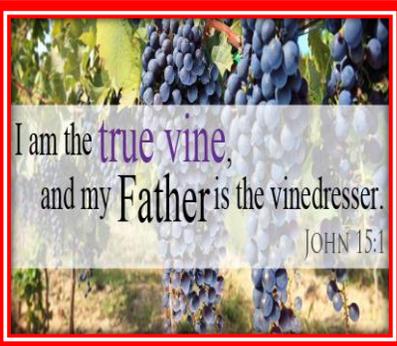


May 13, 2020 – Wednesday of the 5th Week of Easter



God cannot be boxed in

There is always a temptation to put limits on God, to say, in effect, that God cannot do this or that unless this or that happens. We find such a scenario in today's first reading. Some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem came down to the church in Antioch and told converts to the faith from paganism, Gentile Christians, 'Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses, you cannot be saved'. They were saying in effect, 'Much as God would like to include you among those who will inherit eternal life, he is powerless unless you have yourselves circumcised'. We don't have to go back as far as the Acts of the Apostles to find such a mind-set. In living memory, we have allowed ourselves to think that we cannot find favor with God unless we follow certain rules or rituals or long-standing customs. However, God cannot be boxed in like that. Today's gospel reading is taken from the gospel of John and earlier in that gospel Jesus says to Nicodemus, 'the Spirit blows where it chooses'. Because God is all-loving towards us, God is completely free in our regard in a way we can never understand. God's love towards us has been fully revealed in Jesus.

In one of his letters, Paul speaks about 'the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge'. Because our relationship with the Lord is one of love, there is nothing mechanical about that relationship, whereby if we do one thing, he becomes free to do something else. He desires an intimate relationship with us, a relationship of love. It is an empowering relationship, just as the vine empowers the branches to bear fruit. As we grow in our relationship, our friendship, with the Lord, something of his love that surpasses knowledge will become visible in our own lives.

God prunes us

Those who have roses will know that they need to be pruned if you are to get the best out of them. What is true of roses is true of most plants; pruning brings on a new life. Are you willing to let yourself be pruned? Pruning is necessary if a plant is to produce an abundance of good fruit or beautiful flowers. Jesus refers to the procedure of pruning in today's gospel reading. He suggests that in various ways God prunes our lives to make them even more fruitful than they presently are. There are some things we may need to shed if we are to become all that God is calling us to be. Some experiences of letting go, which can be very painful at the time, can help us to grow in our relationship with God and with others. Yet, during those painful experiences of pruning in our lives, the Lord is in communion with us. In the words of the gospel reading, he makes his home in us, he remains in us. We don't have to face into that experience of being pruned on our own, or in the strength of our own resources alone. The Lord who makes his home in us will sustain us in those times and will lead us through the painful experience of pruning into a new and more fruitful life. However, for that to happen we need to remain in him as he remains in us; we need to keep in communion with him, as he is in communion with us.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, I pray that You prune away all my pride and selfishness. And may I be one with you in all that I say and do. Draw me close that I may glorify you and bear fruit for your kingdom. In flame my heart with your love and remove from it anything that would make me ineffective or unfruitful in loving and serving you as my All.

Jesus, I Trust In You