

5th Sunday of Easter, Year B

GOSPEL

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Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Make your home in me as I make mine in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me, and I in them, bear fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire, and they are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.'

(John 15:1-8)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The vineyard was one of the ancient images of the people of Israel, God's chosen people, and God is the vinedresser.
- In John's Gospel, the term 'I am' has a special significance. When Moses encountered God on Mount Sinai, God revealed himself as 'I am who am.' Jesus reveals himself as Son of God in the use of this term and tells something of his mission: I am the Living Water; I am the Good Shepherd; I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; I am the Light of the World; I am the Bread of Life.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Jesus continues to speak to the disciples through imagery that they understood from their everyday experience and with symbols that come from their Jewish tradition. The vine is a staple part of Israel's agricultural life. It carries the idea of the life that flows into the branches from the thick stalk of the vine. Jesus becomes that giver of life and prosperity, but behind his life-giving presence is the Father. Like the vinedresser, the Father must cut away anything that impedes that life or comes from a source that is not nourished from the 'true vine'. Jesus exists to make the Father known, and so it must be with disciples of Jesus. We must 'remain with' Jesus and thus make the Father known.

- Discuss the ways in which you cultivate and keep healthy your connection to Jesus. Who or what helps you do this?
- How may you continue with this after the period of mystagogy?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'Cut off from me you can do nothing.' How are you connected to Christ?
- In what ways are you connected to all the other 'branches' who are the followers of Christ?
- What has been pruned from you?
- What fruit do you bear?
- 'You are pruned already by means of the word I have spoken to you.' Words can be powerful weapons both for healing and hurting. Share experiences of times when words have harmed or healed.
- Offer hospitality this week, not in the sense of offering food or drink but in making someone feel 'at home', secure and accepted.
- Today's gospel acclamation makes a suitable prayer for the week:

*Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord.
My branches bear much fruit.*

