

5th Sunday of Easter – Over the last several weeks we’ve been hearing from John’s Gospel. And what we’ve been hearing is known as the Last Supper Discourse – Jesus’ Farewell talk with His Apostles. In a sense it is Jesus way of telling them what He wishes to leave them once He is no longer in the world – a Last Will, sort of.

What we hear today is that intimate bond / relationship that He wishes to exist between He and they – just as that intimate bond exists between Father, and Son, and Spirit. All three Scripture selections for this weekend tie in with that idea of intimate bond a bond that exists into eternity.

I came across the following as I was doing research for this weekend’s reflection. I never heard this before, but I share it with you as we look at the readings for this Fifth Sunday of Easter – particularly the Gospel passage in which Jesus is referring to Himself as the vine and we the branches on the vine.

‘The “Jesus nut,” also called the “Jesus pin,” is the nut that holds the main rotor to the mast of some helicopters, such as the UH-1 Iroquois helicopter. The long and strong metallic fans of the helicopter are fitted to the main rotor of the mast. The “Jesus nut” is a slang term first coined by American soldiers in Vietnam; the technical term is MRRN or *main rotor retaining nut*. The origin of the term comes from the idea that, if the “Jesus nut” were to fail in flight, the helicopter would detach from the rotors and the only thing left for the crew to do would be to pray to Jesus before the helicopter crashed. Today’s Gospel explains why Jesus must be the pivotal point in our lives, through the little parable of the vine and the branches.’

Jesus took for granted that His Jewish faith needed laws and institutions like the Temple if it was going to transmit its message to the next generation. And so He knew that His Church must be built on the rock of Peter; then God would preserve it from all its enemies. But in today’s Gospel selection, Jesus tells His disciples at the Last Supper (in what is known as the Last Supper Discourse) that if they are to survive they must remain close to Him. He takes the image of the vineyard, which was used to represent Israel in the Old Testament, and in a sense identifies Himself with it by saying: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”

Anyone who has ever raised grapes and had an arbor is familiar with the time and work involved in developing healthy and productive grape-vines. It is a plant which needs a great deal of attention if the best fruit is to be gotten out of it. The ground should be kept as free of weeds as possible, many times trained on trellises. A young vine usually is not allowed to bear fruit for the first three years and each year the vine is cut drastically back to develop and conserve its life and energy. The vine cannot produce the crop of which it is capable without drastic pruning.

Jesus realizes that if the disciples are going to survive then they must be closely connected to Him – much as branches on a vine / an much as the “Jesus pin” which holds the main rotor to the mast of some helicopters. And just as a vine is pruned to make it more productive, the disciples will also grow by being tested in their faith. Jesus tells them to remain close to Him and have the “living sap” flowing in their branches, or else they will shrivel up. He insists that at the heart of their faith there is this close personal relationship with Him: “*Make your home in Me, as I make Mine in you.*” As they are united in Christ so they will be united through Him to the Father.

But this experience is not just for special members of the Church, like the apostles. The Spirit is given to everyone. All of us are called to have this “mystic” experience of being so close to Jesus in their daily life that they produce good fruit.

How can we produce the fruit that will show that Christ’s Church is alive and well? And what is this fruit? We do not need to be mystics like some of the great saints. Instead, all we need to do is make sure our practice of the faith – whether it is going to Mass or saying our prayers – is firmly based on a close personal relationship with Jesus. We don’t, at first, have to do anything other than trying to be at peace in His presence – allowing Him to dwell in us. Then we can share a deep communion with Him as we receive His body and blood in the Eucharist. If we change the image from “the sap in the vines”, we could say that His real presence in His blood gives us new life. If we do have this close relationship of the branch to the “true vine”, then it will produce good fruits especially in the way that we love God and love and care for one another.



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Father Dave

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION
5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER YR-B...
JN 15, 1-8

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.

V.1 opens the gospel reading with the affirmation of who they are (Son=vine and Father=vine grower) and their relationship (Father-Son). This is not also to state who is superior between the two. Rather, it is to present to us how they complement each other...the future of the vine is dependent on the vine grower and the vine grower's effort is dependent on the kind (quality) of produce the vine would yield in the future. Though we are gifted with our own individuality/uniqueness let us look at it as not the assertion of this individuality/uniqueness neither a proposal of giving it up but rather let us use that gift in answering the question, *'how could I fit into a greater milieu of life and find myself related to others who also have their own individuality/uniqueness?'* **'Son-Father' and 'Vine-Vine grower'** are put together to come up not only with a scenic vineyard but productive vineyard.

God and Satan once had a meeting about food. They agreed the same food would be served and same utensils with particular measurements are to be used properly. The plate is one meter in diameter...spoon fork knife two meters long. In Hell, they keep complaining for they cannot eat using those irregular silverwares. But in Heaven, they are all satisfied and thanked God for the sumptuous food. Hell asked Heaven, 'how were you able to eat?' Heaven answered, 'Very simple...we kept distance...put the plate in the middle (two souls and plate

forming triangle)...Soul #1 sliced the steak and gave it to Soul #2...Soul #2 in turn did slice the steak and gave to Soul #1...is that not amazing ...' In Hell, they asserted their individuality and they are only related to their own sinfulness. In Heaven, they have complemented each other and they are very much related to each other.

Isn't that the reality of earth (Creator-creatures) or heaven (God the redeemer-creatures the redeemed) is a concrete example of this relationship. God is relating to us-'Hey I can help you.' And mankind relating to God-'I cannot do this without you my God.' Let us not assert our own individuality/uniqueness-'No man is an island.' But simply allow the self to be related to others and come up with the beauty of heaven.

Father Rody