

# Fifth Sunday of Easter

Jesus said to his disciples:

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

He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit,  
and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.

You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.

Remain in me, as I remain in you.

Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own  
unless it remains on the vine,

so neither can you unless you remain in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches.

Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit,  
because without me you can do nothing.

Anyone who does not remain in me  
will be thrown out like a branch and wither;

people will gather them and throw them into a fire  
and they will be burned.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you,  
ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.

By this is my Father glorified,

that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

Jn 15:1-8

"I am the vine, you are the branches."

Something connects people together. Something very powerful but difficult to grasp. No matter how much we try to deny it or how much we attempt to ignore it, something pulls us together.

A brilliant man a couple thousand years ago thought he found the explanation: man is by nature a social animal. However, that somehow seems insufficient, and as much as it explains our strange ability of sticking together, it always ends at the question: why are you talking to me?

Many less brilliant followers of this man proposed other possibilities. Is it power that gets us together and brings order among us? Is it money and ability to influence events? Is it the color of skin? Is it the language we speak? The place we were born? Or is it maybe, finally, some mysterious, yet-undiscovered combination of DNA? All of them seem attractive at the first glance. All of them fail at the end in encounter with an actual person.

"I am the vine, you are the branches." There is no clearer and simpler explanation of an endlessly subtle mystery of our existence. The very life itself is what connects us. This very life is personal because it is a gift of a person. This very life is holy because it comes from somebody who is holy. Life itself teaches us that we don't come from ourselves and don't live for ourselves, that we are a gift, that we are sustained constantly by the abundance of the same gift, and we are never happy until we offer ourselves to somebody.

Without this endless circle of gift, we become alone, and we become dry. When we break this life-giving circulation, we stop living — even if our biological functions are still active. The recognition of this life has the power to teach us how to find answers to the most difficult social problems. It has the power to reconcile the enemies and to give meaning to every individual life, because this life begets new life.

“Remain in me as I remain in you.” Live this great gift to the full. Be astonished every time you recognize it in its endless variety of humanity. Be grateful for every breath and every heartbeat it gives you — because this is how we glorify our Creator. This is how we meet the One who is Life itself.

The story of the Gospel, everything who Jesus was, what he did, and what he said is the renewal of this gift of life and the manual on how this gift should be lived. This is the story of life told by Life itself.

This is also how we meet the One who will raise us to life on the last day.