

“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” (Jn 15:5).

In 1385, the Antinori Family of Italy began their business of growing grapes for wineⁱ. 6 centuries later, the family still runs the business today. In our modern world, where we want instant results, it is helpful to look at time tested traditions, and values that we might not lose sight of what is true, beautiful, and sacred. To keep a business in the family for 27 generations, a family must take great care to look beyond the moment and consider the impact of a decision made today on future generations.

Life begins with a simple seed. Once planted, a grapevine will take about three years before it begins to produce fruit. For a fine wine, the family may wait up to 10 years before the grapes bear fruit proper for the best wine. The vine continues to mature and as it does, the taste and quality of the grapes mature as well. Old vines are preferably 50 years or older. While an older vine does not produce as much fruit, the fruit of the vine is more concentrated yielding a richer wine. Older vines dig deeper into the earth pulling their nutrients and water from richer more stable sources.ⁱⁱ According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the oldest living grapevine is over 400 years old.

“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.” God created us for eternity. Each human life is precious for we are all created in the image and likeness of God. Great care is required for a person to become their best.

- The Father is the vine grower – The Creator gives us life and cares deeply for us. God is the Father “of the poor, of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection” (CCC 238). God extends a loving care for all his children.
- Jesus is the true vine – he is completely obedient to the Father’s will.ⁱⁱⁱ In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39).
- Each person is a branch of the true vine – You need pruning to bear fruit. If you bear fruit for yourself alone, then you act selfishly and serve no greater good. Through the sacrament of confession, God heals us and forgives our sins. The Father prunes so that you may bear a more concentrated fruit of love. The fruit God desires is “releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke? Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house? Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh” (Isa 58:6-7).

To grow the choicest fruit, you must stay attached to the vine, to Jesus, lest you wither and die. So often in life, a person turns from God or searches for God in the wrong places. Deep in your being you know right from wrong. God has planted truth in your soul. It is so easy to be deceived when you look for a quick solution. The fruit of a 3-year-old vine is not its best. What quality of fruit do you produce in searching for a solution that does not take into account the eternal laws of God? What quality of fruit do you bear when you choose to ignore truth, beauty, and goodness? “The disciples who do not bear fruit, who do not perform works of love, the Father will cut off from the vine.”^{iv}

God’s pruning involves the cross, sacrifice, and suffering for the good of others. Jesus “came so that we might have life and have it more abundantly” (Jn 10:10). Jesus shows us the way, he lays down his life for us. “Come follow me” (Mt 4:19). God calls you to a life of

sacrifice for the good of others. In love, in suffering, in faith, you mature as a Christian. Your roots grow stronger, they dig deeper, they seek the richer more stable sources of life.

The more mature one is in their faith, the more a person recognizes the need for pruning. I am reminded of the saintly Mother Theresa who had a heart for the poorest of the poor ... she reached out for God's mercy every 8 days for the pruning of her sins through the sacrament of confession. To prune is to cleanse, to be made pure. The purer the branch, the sweeter the fruit.

God wants each of us to break the Guinness Book of Records. 400 years is an instant in comparison to union with God for eternity. Remain united to Jesus in prayer. Seek the healing touch of Jesus in the sacraments. Enlighten your mind by immersing yourself in his Holy Word. You must be rooted in the love of Christ to bear the sweetest fruit.

“Believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us” (1 Jn 3:23). The more you love Jesus, the more you bend your will to the will of the Father, the more your life will be conformed to Christ. Created in the likeness and image of God, you are called to become a living icon of Jesus. When people see you, they should also see God's love growing in the world.^v

ⁱ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinori

ⁱⁱ winefolly.com/deep-dive/why-old-vine-wines-are-so-special/

ⁱⁱⁱ Martin, Francis; Wright, William M. IV. **The Gospel of John**. Pg. 255.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid, 256.