

Fifth Sunday of Easter May 2, 2021

I remember when my kids were small, responding to a question by answering “because I said so!” In hindsight I realize this answer came as the result of my lack of patience at the time, having run out of answers for the child in question. I also remember thinking, “Wow, I sound just like my mother.” Either way, not the best way to have handled the situation. I expected my kids to trust me to know what was best for them without having to provide an explanation.

In today’s Gospel according to John, Jesus says his “Father is the vine grower.” The job of the vine grower or vinedresser, first and foremost, is to prune. These pruning techniques take into consideration the shape and consistency of the vine. Pruning is essential as it removes dead, diseased or stunted fruits to make room for new growth, leading to a healthy productive vine. The vinedresser also is responsible for keeping away pests from the fruit, making sure the vines have enough water and makes sure the fruit is ready to harvest at the right time.

It is fitting Jesus describes his Father as the vinedresser. The Father knows when, where and what to prune in us to make us the best version of ourselves in order to bear good fruit. Under the Father’s protection we are safe from pests and have the opportunity to be nourished as we need. How we benefit from this though, is still up to us. We still need to give our “yes!”

Consider what it means to “abide in the Father.” Abiding in the Father is to have our hearts, minds, and thoughts filled with God, so much so, that our words become his words. To abide in the Father, he offers us protection from “pests” (temptations), nurturing us when needed, with his own body and blood, and with his word—the teachings of Jesus.

To abide in the Father is so intimate and so connected, it is hard to tell where one begins and one ends. This requires trust on our part especially when we are having trouble understanding that pruning is good for us or do not feel the presence of God in us. We have been grafted to the Father. We are rooted in faith. Apart from God we can do nothing.

As disciples of Christ, the fruit we bear can and should draw others to the life giving vine of everlasting life. All the good we do will be meaningless unless it is done in the name of Jesus. We come from the finest of rootstock! We are specially chosen by God to be his branches in this world producing the very finest fruit possible!

Just as I found myself, all those years ago, sounding like my mother, so should I now find myself sounding like the Jesus. “Abide in me as I abide in you.” Trust in the Father to produce in you, his disciple, the best fruit you have ever tasted!

Reflection by Julie de Gouw, Pastoral Minister