



May 6, 2012

Fourth Sunday of Easter—Good Shepherd Sunday

"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.—John 15:1

Dear Friends;

A couple of months ago, someone was visiting me and saw my cherry trees. He asked me ‘who the heck butchered your trees.’ I explained that I had trimmed them severely because I was trying to get them to grow in the direction of my garden rather than over the fence on the neighbor’s yard. The trees now have leaves and are in flower. So if the late rains haven’t destroyed the blossoms I hope to have a good crop of cherries by June. At least that is the theory.

Jesus uses many down to earth images to speak to us of our faith, God and the Reign of God. The image Jesus uses one of intimacy and care. If you are familiar with the process of growing grapes for wine, you know that it is a labor of love. One needs to daily check the vines. There had to be just the right amount of sun and shade. If the canopy of leaves is too thick the grapes will not be able to develop for lack of sunshine. Too much fruit can also stunt the growth of the grapes, so excessive amounts of fruit are trimmed away so the remaining fruit can develop to a greater size. To grow grapes like wine making is a labor of love. The best grapes will come from carefully nurtured vines.

The image that Jesus is painting for us is not of a harsh judge but a passionate lover. The vinedresser is intimately connected to his creation. The other part of the image is that of Jesus as vine and we as branches. He is trying to teach us that he is intimately connected to us. By his birth, by his sharing our existence and even his sharing in our death Jesus is intimately connected to us. And he also is going to share with us the blessing of rebirth to new life.

Each year we celebrate this new life. We use signs and symbols that speak of transformation and Jesus’ resurrection. We celebrate that new life by grafting new members onto the vine through baptism, confirmation and first Eucharist. We accompany these celebrations with flowers, eggs and butterflies signs of renewal and transformation. Each year we pray that our faith is deepened and our hope grow stronger.

Last weekend, there was a tragic car accident in Brentwood involving a group of young people. This accident has touched members of our own community. We are saddened by the tragedy and we cling to our faith that promises us new life.

Sometimes terrible things happen and we do not know why. But we do know that at such times God is there. Like a vine grower intimately connected to his vines, God is connected with us. God feels our pain. Now it feels like we are experiencing a horrible pruning in a harsh winter. But through the power of God’s love and our love we hope to see one day the abundant renewal of life in the Springtime of Resurrection. Our hearts and prayers go out to the families and friends of the injured and deceased.

May Christ the true vine continue to make us grow in faith and love that we can bring health and healing to the world!

Peace,

Fr Ron