

5th SUNDAY OF EASTER 2021.

VINE AND BRANCHES

Since last October, I have been a resident of Napa Valley, the Wine Country, for eight years. It has always been exciting, especially during spring. It is always very fascinating to see the vineyard springing new branches ready to bear fruit. Obviously, pruning has been done prior to this spring. The vine has lost a few branches in the process and these have been gathered together for another purpose since they are no longer part of the vine. They are already separated from the main vine, they have no life, they can't feed, and they are dry and dead. I am sure the people of Napa understand the gospel of today better than anybody else since all this is happening in their environment.

Our gospel today talks of the vine and the branches and pruning. It talks of Christians being **linked to Christ as the vine and to one another as the branches**. There is nothing like a solitary Christian. As Jesus states, ***"I am the Vine and you are the Branches"***. This gives us the image of **closeness, unity, and interdependence** to one another and to Christ as our Vine. It reminds us that we should not **forget the Lord or ignore one another**, thus living for **ourselves and separating from that unity**.

Vine and branches need each other, the **vine cannot bear fruit** without the branches and the branches cannot **have life** without the Vine, hence the call of being in Christ and being there for one another. The branches need the vine. This is absolutely obvious. Cut off from the vine there is no life, we ***wither and die***. The vine needs the branches. It is the branches that **bear fruit. Christ needs us too, and has given you and me the mission to bear fruit in the world.**

This is what we are told in the first reading in the Acts of Apostles. Christ is using the aggressiveness of Paul, his strength, gifts, power, and talents he had in persecuting the Christians to **proclaiming the Gospel**

after his conversion. We must be ready and willing to present the Risen Lord to the world despite the challenges of the society. Christ depends on us in the world today. How are we going to manifest Him in this volatile world? Jesus Christ is not asking us to ***be successful but to bear fruit and to be fruitful.*** He depends on us to bear fruit in the world. ***Unity and love*** is what is going to make us fruitful in the world. By this all will know we are living branches of the true vine by the care we show one another.

Following Christ has really never been a ***private personal matter.*** Christians have always been coming together **to profess their faith, to witness to His Resurrection, and to live by His teaching while belonging to a community.** *We need to belong to that community which enables us to support one another by prayer, worship, and loving service.* **The witness of an individual is powerful BUT THE WITNESS OF THE COMMUNITY IS MORE POWERFUL. LET US NOT SEPARATE OURSELVES FROM THE VINE AND LET US BE AVAILABLE TO ONE ANOTHER AS TRUE BRANCHES.**