

5th Sunday of Easter Year B 2024

Biblical Reflections in the Readings,

Acts of the Apostles 9:26-31. 1 John 3:18-24. Gospel of John 15:1-8

From Fr Kevin Walsh, Sydney, Australia

PREPARE

We invite you to find a comfortable position as you read this reflection. You may like to light a candle. Make yourself comfortable. Become aware of your breathing. When you are ready, slowly read the reflection, pause when you are drawn to stop and reflect on what you have read. Write down your thought and feeling to ponder on these later if you wish.



Together, we can make it happen!

This week's gospel is linked closely to that of last week. Like the gospel about the Good Shepherd, Jesus uses another simple image of the vine and the branches, to instruct the people about his relationship with them, and theirs with him. He uses an image with which all of his listeners would be familiar, and it would be quite easy for them to understand. It is also easy for us to understand too. So, let's have a look at it.

This is really an enormously powerful teaching. We are attached to Jesus, just as he is to the Father. We can draw our life from him, so that he can produce fruit in us and through us, if we want to respond! In another part of the gospel Jesus tells us, *"You didn't choose me, I chose you, and appointed you to bear fruit, fruit that will last."* He speaks very simply and very clearly, even to the point of telling us that, apart from him, we can do nothing.

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Taking this theme even further, Jesus establishes and speaks of a direct chain of connection between the Father, himself, and us. It is obvious that he sees and thinks of us as being called to share in the divine life of the Trinity. We really need to pause and reflect upon that point...it is just so powerful, and thus we are empowered through the Holy Spirit to be The Living editions of the Good news! Not Museum artefacts! They are dead! Sometimes I wonder where the joy has gone with some of our Leaders and faithful.

Pruning is necessary, if fruit is to be brought forth in abundance from a vine, bush, or tree. However, the Gardener must have the wisdom to know what to prune, and how much, and what the possibilities could be because of this action. Branches are pruned to strengthen the tree's growth and sometimes to produce more abundant fruit or flowers. Quite often, through trials and tribulations, we are pruned. Any worthwhile growth in our lives takes place during times of struggle, and never when everything is smooth, calm, and even.

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Sometimes we are pruned by each other. This can come about within a real spirit of love and forgiveness; it is on this basis of trust that we can tell the story just as it is to each other. In this act of faith, we can sometimes suffer, and bleed through the truth that someone else has told us, because it may well be the truth about us, and it might hurt, and the truth may be calling us to change, hence spiritual pruning is at work! What can hamper this growth??? Pride, Jealousy etc..... all the opposite gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Suffering can be another kind of pruning. Generally, we don't go looking for suffering in our life, it somehow finds us. Suffering can enable us to be more sensitive to other people, it can knock a few chips of the old block, which is me, and it can invite us to love more deeply. I once heard a great old Passionist Father Bonaventure CP, say to me....'*Sometimes Our Lord puts us on our backs, so that we can look up into His eyes*' a great wise saying from a man who lived and grew through his relationship with Jesus and mission to His people. The great English writer C.S Lewis once said, "*Jesus didn't come to take suffering and pain away, He came to fill it with His presence.*" That is something to chew on, because in lots of ways that is very true. Pruning can also be used as another metaphor when it comes to refining gold and silver in fire.

