

## Fifth Sunday of Easter

A man was going to a costume party dressed as the Devil – red suit, pointy tail and pitchfork. As he walked it began to rain and he looked for shelter. The only place was a little country church, so in he went. It just so happened they were holding a revival meeting that night. When people turned and saw the Devil, they dived for the exits. One poor fellow's coat got caught on a pew. As the man in the costume approached, he turned and cried "Mr. Devil, I've been a member of this church for 30 years, but I've been on your side all along."

Dear Friends,

Life's purpose is about building and maintaining genuine connections with ourselves and others and God. Buddha, one of the religious founders in India after his enlightenment gives four noble truths.

1. Life is a suffering: (Dukkha) life brings a sense of disconnection when we expect happiness from the things or states that are impermanent. Have you ever felt like you don't fit in, unfulfilled, unworthy, disconnected, unsatisfied, unhappy in life?
2. Suffering comes from craving and clinging: (Samudaya) Finding connection in the wrong places can lead us to cling or crave things that we do not need. Clinging to a bad relationship, to a job for a sense of security, to a home because we are afraid of change...these situations bring suffering. Wanting more and more money, better and better cars, bigger and bigger homes, fitter and fitter bodies, etc....can also bring suffering.
3. (Nirodha) To stop suffering, craving and clinging must cease. Awakening to connect authentically with what really matters can stop suffering. Accepting, embracing and gratefulness for what we have can lead to a path to inner peace. Digging in to find the true reasons behind the cravings and clinging can lead us to connect with our true self, which can bring purpose and fulfillment.
4. (Magga) To end suffering, one must follow a path of ethical conduct, mental discipline and wisdom. Genuine connection to oneself and others can lead to a meaningful and purposeful life. To build authentic relationships with others and ourselves, one may follow a life full of: rightful actions and speech, honesty, compassion, kindness, mindfulness and meditation.

Today's Gospel talks about connecting ourselves to Jesus and bear fruit. This is the famous parable of a relation between a Master and the disciple. A disciple is a connector not a competitor. Comparison doesn't help in the discipleship. Embracing helps make more disciples. Pruning is a necessary step in any growth. If we are not pruned, we will never

become a better person ourselves. When we are attached with God, pruning and growing happens together. This connection results in not only being with Jesus, but being Jesus to others and becoming Jesus in the process. That is what happened to St. Paul on the way to Damascus.

The second reading insists how to do it not in word or speech but in deed and truth. Today let us think how am I connected with Jesus in my life. Let our actions show our fruits. Let our life prove that we are connected with Jesus.