

Fifth Sunday of Easter

As the storm raged, the captain realized his ship was sinking fast. He called out, "Anyone here knows how to pray?"

A pastor stepped forward. "Captain, I know how to pray."

"Good," said the captain, "you pray while the rest of us put on our life jackets – we're one short."

Dear Friends,

I recently read this story which we all know, "Jesus Pin". The imagery of the vine and the branches remind me of another imagery called 'Jesus nut' or 'Jesus pin', used by the American soldiers. 'Jesus' nut' is the main rotor retaining nut (MRRN) that holds the main rotor to the mast of some helicopters, such as the UH-1 Iroquois helicopter; or more generally, is any component which represents a single point of failure with catastrophic consequences. The term 'Jesus' nut' may have been coined by American soldiers in Vietnam; the Vietnam War was the first war to feature large numbers of soldiers riding in helicopters. If the Jesus pin were to fail in flight, the helicopter would detach from the rotors and the only thing left for the crew to do would be to "pray to Jesus."

As we know that Jesus is the good shepherd, he wants to affirm his divinity and their oneness. The Gospel presents three related images: Jesus as the vine, the believers as the branches and the father as the vine grower. The father, the vine grower, cares for the well-being and the fruitfulness of the vine through the process of pruning.

Invariably all the religion talks about pruning. I remember my childhood days when my parents helped me grow in beautiful ways. A lot of times I was chastised or given little punishment to mature myself. The community helped me in so many ways to be a better person. Sometimes I didn't like the way they treated me, but later I realized all these things they did helped me to become a better person. I can quote a number of examples. You may have similar experiences in your lives. It doesn't mean I hate my parents. Still, I am connected to my parents, and realize they corrected me as an act of love to be a better person.

Jesus tells the same. Jesus tells us he is the Vine/Vinedresser, and we are his branches. Each of us desires to be in a strong vine and branches relationship with Jesus, yet often, we focus on what we are doing to promote that relationship and can easily lose sight of and gratitude for what Jesus as the Vinedresser does for us each day.

Jesus is active in our life. He pays attention to us. He pours out grace to feed and nourish us. When we are feeling weak, he takes steps to keep us attached securely to the vine, often through a community that gathers around us in support and prayer, grasping onto our flailing tendrils and weaving them more securely into the vine.

We hear the word 'remain' so many times in this passage. How do we want to remain with him? So, what do we need pruned out of our lives to bear more fruit?

Are we willing to let God cut those things out of our life and throw them into the fire to be done away with?

If God loves you and me, he will prune us. When pruning happens, we have growth in us. John in the second reading tells us that let us love one another not in word or speech but in deed and truth. This is the big thing to follow. It can only happen when we remain in God. When we are disconnected from God, our focus becomes more worldly.

Let's take some time to think about it so we can all be stronger and produce great fruit in our church and community.