

5th Sunday of Easter

Last week it was sheep: this week, it's the vine. Jesus offers us another (agricultural) image to explain the mystery of his offering of himself, and our belonging to him, our being part of him, which comes about through the sacrament of Baptism.

This is the period of "Mystagogy", the time when the newly baptised are helped to see what life in Christ really means.

Today this comes out strongly for all of us, with the readings emphasising the moral aspects of life in Christ: it is not simply enough to "belong" to him: our belonging must be shown by what we do, by the fruits we produce - while remembering that we cannot bear fruit except in him.

Acts 9:26-31

Barnabas introduces Saul to the apostles, preparing the way for the mission of the future apostle, Paul.

1 John 3:18-24

We know that God lives in us when the Holy Spirit enables us to believe in Jesus and love one another as he told us to.

John 15:1-8

Just as the branch has to be attached to the vine if it is to bear fruit, so we have to be united to Christ if we are to bear the fruits of love.

Reflection



You might be surprised to know that the oldest and largest grapevine in the world is in Britain, at Hampton Court Palace, in Richmond, south London. It's in a purpose-built greenhouse in the gardens. Known as the Great Vine, it was planted in 1768, over 250 years ago.. It is a very fruitful vine. The average annual crop of sweet black dessert grapes is about 272 kilograms; but in the autumn of 2001 it was 383 kilograms – the best crop ever.

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was in charge of the gardens at Hampton Court and it was he who, in 1768, directed the planting of the Great Vine from a cutting taken at Valentines Mansion at Ilford.

The grapes are ripe after August Bank Holiday and are sold during the first three weeks of September in the Hampton Court shop.

Queen Victoria had grapes from the Great Vine sent to the Royal Household at Windsor or to Osbourne House on the Isle of Wight. The decision to allow them to be sold to visitors was made by Edward VII, who decided the Royal Household no longer needed them. Later they were sold in small wicker baskets at St Dunstons, the home for soldiers blinded in the First World War.

In the Second World War German P-O-Ws were given the task of thinning out the bunches of grapes.



“Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty.”



“I am
the
vine,
you are
the
branches.
Those
who
abide
in me
and I in
them
bear
much
fruit.”

The traditional grapevine is one of the world’s most important agricultural crops. At the time of Jesus vineyards were everywhere, and practices relating to their cultivation would be well-known. In today’s Gospel Jesus emphasises that a vine needs to be carefully tended, and that it has a living and connected structure. The vine produces fruit through the branches and the branches are dependent on the central vine.

Jesus describes himself as the “true vine” and says, “my Father is the vinedresser”. The motif of the grapevine is present in a great deal of Christian art as a metaphor of the ongoing presence of Jesus. On the mosaic floors of churches of the Byzantine period in the Holy Land and its vicinity, the vine is often seen and it is a symbol of Jesus. The

love and connection between God, Jesus and our Parish community is described in John’s Gospel using the image of the vine and the branches. Jesus tells us that “you are the branches” and, he tells us, that we will bear “fruit in plenty” if we remain with him. The organic unity suggests a community of a lot of people who share in a single life. Union with Christ is the condition of fruitfulness. Being followers of Jesus gives our lives meaning and direction. Fruit is possible only if we are in union with him, for he is the productive source of it all.

Our opportunity of bearing any fruit worthy of our natures and of God’s purpose concerning us is by that vital union with Jesus Christ (vine and branches). If we do not have that vital bond, there may be plenty of activity and mountains of work in our lives, but there will be no lasting fruit. The next time you eat a grape and savour its succulent flavour, reflect upon the fruits that we share in our lives because of our relationship with God. The Christian faith is an experience of being in relationship to God, to each other, and to all our family and friends. Caring and love bind us all together in spite of lockdown.



"Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty."

This week we are called upon to reflect on the growth in our own lives. To reflect on Christ's promise of that connection and his love. Remember in this Easter season that resurrection fuels and nurtures growth, hope and love.

In America, Tuesday this week is **NATIONAL TEACHER DAY**. It was Eleanor Roosevelt who persuaded the 81st Congress to proclaim a National Teacher Day in 1953.

All Teachers are true heroes in our communities. Through their dedication to children, they work millions of small miracles every day.

We have to wait till the Day after St Francis Day for our day for "honouring teachers and recognising the lasting contributions they make to our lives." The 5th October is also the UNESCO World Teachers Day.

Any day is a good day to honour the hard working, patient and understanding people to whom we entrust our children. So let's offer up a little prayer for them on Tuesday. Thank-you - the future of our world is in your hands.

GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

P	L	E	N	W	T	E	Y	E	P	VINE	BRANCH	FRUIT	PRUNES
Y	O	G	O	E	N	U	R	P	S	WORD	HOME	PLENTY	THROWN
T	L	R	N	T	H	R	O	W	N	FIRE	BURNT	GLORY	DISCIPLES
N	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E	S				
E	V	R	U	F	R	O	G	L	Y				
L	S	T	I	U	R	F	E	S	F				
P	A	R	N	I	A	M	E	R	R				
T	E	E	F	R	O	C	U	A	I				
O	S	O	B	H	U	T	I	E	U				
E	H	C	N	A	R	B	A	B	T				

