

Easter 5B (2024)

Three people were discussing some recent translations of the Bible. One said, 'I like the New American Version. It is so much clearer than the older versions and is so much easier to read.' The second said, 'I like the Jerusalem Bible. It's not only clearer, but it's more poetic and better laid out. The third said, 'I like my mother's translation best of all. She translates the Bible into prayer and acts of love which makes such a difference to our lives'.

As St John said, 'love is not just to be words or mere talk but something real and active'. Like I said a couple of Sunday's ago – the bible is not a bed-time story-book but a plan of action. A song is not a song unless you sing it. Love is only a word until you give it away.

Last Sunday Jesus, comparing himself to the Shepherd, says: 'I know my sheep and mind know me. We have to work at deepening our relationship with Jesus. In John's Gospel Jesus says *'you are my friends if you do what I command you'*. If we are remiss in doing what he tells us, friendship with our Lord can't be taken for granted. And again he says: *'those who do not love me, do not keep my words'*

At our baptism we have been grafted on to the main Vine which is Jesus Christ. Just like the branches draw their life from the Vine, we draw spiritual strength from Jesus so that the fruits of this union will be evident in the way we live.

This happens especially at Mass. In John's Gospel Jesus says: 'whoever receives me in Holy Communion will draw life from me.' It's like the baby in the womb drawing life from its mother - a life which continues to be nurtured by the parents for many years after the baby is born. But this love will eventually come to fruition. What a joy it is for the mother and father when their children begin to respond to their love in simple and spontaneous ways. The same applies to our relationship with Jesus. What joy it brings to the heart of Jesus when we love him for his own sake in good times and bad –

not turning our backs on Him when the going gets rough. In last Sunday's gospel Jesus says: 'the Father loves me because I lay down my life'. I know God loves everyone but when we lay down our lives for each other and put their needs before our own, he's especially close to us. Jesus laid down His life for us out of sheer love.

Today Jesus talks about a branch being pruned to make it bear even more fruit. If a little pruning comes our way in the form of difficult people, instead of losing our patience, it might just be a little love-test from Our Lord. It's easy to love those who love us. But by loving those who test our patience, real and lasting fruit is produced.

The world today seems to be going through difficult times – anything could spark an all-out war. The root cause is a crisis of love which can only be quelled by us remaining part of the vine which is Jesus Himself. Cut off from Him we can do precious little to bring about peace in our own hearts and among nations.