

HOMILY – 5TH SUNDAY IN EASTER “B” 4-29-2018

“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain on the vine.”

Today’s Gospel is not about plants. It’s about people. It is not about vines. It’s about life. How do we, God’s people, stay connected to the source of life, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Jesus makes it very clear, we cannot bear fruit unless we remain connected to the Lord. We all want to be connected to the Lord but we find ourselves being called in so many directions. We have jobs to go to, children to feed and send off to school and little infants to care for at home. We have shopping to do, doctor and dental appointments to keep, house cleaning to finish, bills to pay, laundry piled up, aging parents to attend to, appointments to set up, children to drive to sporting events and then there is the unexpected crisis that we can never plan on. Somewhere in all that activity we try to fit in sleep.

Pope Francis in his recent letter to the world **“On the Call to Holiness in Today’s World”** talks about a spirituality that is not based on hours and hours of prayer, a full understanding of complicated dogmas or a contemplative monastic approach to prayer. The Pope recalls that throughout the history of the Church **it has always been clear that a person’s perfection is measured not by the information or knowledge they possess, but by the depth of their charity.**

I think Pope Francis is trying to remind us that the many activities and obligations and duties we carry out each day are a way to holiness. If we can do these things not just out of obligation but out of love, we are on the path to holiness. I always was inspired by the example of a wonderful priest, Fr. Bill Fitzgerald, God rest his soul, who always looked at whatever he was called upon to do as an opportunity to meet Christ and serve Christ.

The holiness that Pope Francis calls us to is to try to live our lives in generosity and service. When we do that we are allowing the very life of Christ to grow within us and believe that God abides in our hearts. This is a truth we ought to remember always. No doubt, that is a challenge. There is always the temptation to believe that somehow we are going to be happier if we think only about ourselves, if we can accumulate wealth by any means possible, if we can somehow end up number one through deception or manipulation. That kind of thinking promises happiness, but it does not deliver.

The only thing that really makes us happy and holy is when we know we can give life to another, when we can raise the burden off of the shoulders of someone who is struggling, when we can teach a child to read, or free another from ignorance or depression. We do this because we are connected to the vine and are infused with the love of God.

Concluding story

Edna was a new bride. When she moved into her husband's home she put a shoebox on a shelf in a closet and she asked her husband never to touch it.

For 50 years Jack left that box alone until Edna was old and dying. One day when he was putting her affairs in order he found the box again and thought it might hold something important. Opening it he found two doilies - and \$82,500 in cash.

He took the box to her and asked about the contents. She said, "My mother gave me that box the day we were married. She told me to make a doily to help me ease my frustrations every time I got mad at you."

Jack was very touched that in 50 years she'd only been mad at him twice.

"What's the \$82,500 for?" He asked.

"Oh, that's the money I made selling doilies."