

Rev. Derek Fairman

5th Sunday of Easter B

This Sunday the Lord teaches us that He is the vine, and we are the branches. If we remain in Him, we will bear much fruit. What is the Lord speaking about? Well, the Lord refers to spiritual fruit. He means that if we are faithful to Him, that is, if we remain in Him, He will remain in us, and we will receive many blessings and graces in our lives. We will experience many ways in which God gives us what we need.

For each of us, the seed was planted in Baptism. That seed grew and grew until we reached an age for pruning, that is, the age when we had parts of our souls that were touched by sin, and we received healing and purification in Confession. That seed blossomed into First Communion, then Confirmation. At each stage of our lives, the seed planted in Baptism bears fruit in some unique way, and it is meant to bear fruit.

For the Church, there are many ways in which the Church bears fruit. The Sacraments of Initiation are ways that the Church bears fruit: Baptisms, Confirmations, First Communions. The Church is always seeking ways to bring those who have not received the Good News into new life in Baptism. The Church wants those who have been baptized outside of the Church to come to allow that seed planted in Baptism to blossom into First Communion and Confirmation.

The Church also bears fruit whenever her children enter the religious life, or when her sons enter the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Ordinations and religious professions are examples of the Church being refreshed at Easter time. These are ways in which the Church bears fruit, but also the seed that was planted at Baptism bears special fruit for those who enter religious life or who receive Holy Orders.

The mystery that the Lord is speaking of in the Gospel is the mystery of fruitful virginity. That sounds like an oxymoron, and in a way it is. Yet in the Lord's ways, it makes perfect sense. The mystery of fruitful virginity is found first and foremost in the Virgin Mary. In Mary, her virginity was a sign of her fidelity. In the Old Testament, the people's fidelity or infidelity to the covenant could be portrayed in terms of marriage, but it could also be portrayed in terms of virtue versus vice or a dissipated life. Mary was perfectly faithful to the Lord, and her virginity was a sign of that fidelity.

She is the Mother of God, and her maternity is the other part of the mystery. Mary bore the Son of God, and that was because of the working of the Holy Spirit. Mary's maternity was

due to the working of the Spirit, and her virginity was a sign of her virtue and fidelity. The two go together in her, and the two can only be understood together. Truly bearing fruit in life requires fidelity. Infidelity leads to nothing but barrenness and despair.

That was true not only for the time whenever the Lord Jesus came down from Heaven and was born. That was true well into His adulthood, whenever Mary listened to His words and took them to heart. Mary continued to be faithful to the Lord, of course, and in a way, she made a home for the Lord's words in her heart, just as she had made a home for the Word of God in the Old Testament before the Lord Jesus came. She will always be the Mother of the Lord, and she will always be faithful to the Lord.

Even though this mystery found its perfect fulfillment in the Blessed Virgin, this mystery is not limited to her. This mystery also exists in the Church; the Church bears its own fruit in her fidelity to the Lord. The Church bears fruit, in her sacramental life, especially in the Sacraments of Initiation and the Sacraments of Vocation. The pruning that the Lord spoke about takes place in the Sacraments of Healing, namely Anointing of the Sick and Confession.

The same is true for each one of us. Only when we are faithful will we receive the fruit of the Spirit: gentleness, self-control, faithfulness, patience, goodness, joy, love, peace and kindness. We must be faithful to the Lord to remain in Him and to receive His blessings. If we are faithful to the Lord, and worship Him as we should (and as often as we should), then we will bear fruit in the virtues that we will have, and the way that our hearts will be satisfied and happy. We will be blessed because the Lord has given us all good things.

If we are not faithful to the Lord, we will experience trouble. We will not receive the blessings that we need. Infidelity means not remaining in the Lord. Infidelity does not bear fruit. Infidelity leads to barrenness, restlessness and emptiness. No one wants to remain barren, and no one wants to be restless and empty. However, sometimes we also don't want to do what the Lord asks of us, and we don't want to remain in the Lord's grace. Then, we don't want to be empty, but we don't want to be refreshed either.

As we approach the altar, we ask the Lord to keep our parish faithful and bear fruit, and that we ourselves will remain faithful to the Lord, so that He can bring about many spiritual benefits for us. We pray for those who feel empty, who do not want to be barren but are afraid to come to the Lord, that they too may enter into the mystery of fruitful virginity and find peace. We pray that the Virgin Mother of God will help us to remain in her Son.