

Easter 5B (2021)

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. You'll never learn how to ride a bike without falling off it a few times. 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 - just building up a friendship with anyone takes time and effort. Spiritual fruits are not produced with a wave of the hand.

At our baptism we have been grafted on to the main Vine which is Jesus Christ and at our confirmation the union is strengthened. 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 our lives.

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 love and attention 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 and not merely for what we can get from Him in the line of favours. 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 in simple and varied ways he's especially fond of us because we follow closely in His Son's footsteps.

Today Jesus talks about a branch being pruned to make it bear even more fruit. If a little suffering or inconvenience comes our way, it might just be a little love-test from Our Lord. It's not very difficult to love those who love you. But by loving those who stretch our patience real and lasting fruit is produced.

Last Sunday we spoke about a shortage in vocations. However, I believe that the real crisis in the world is a drought of love which is quenched only by the Holy Spirit. It can only be sustained however, by us remaining part of the Vine, which is Jesus Himself. Cut off from Him we can do precious little.