

Easter 5B

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 where we can see it being living out in her daily life.

These are the fruits Jesus is referring to in today's gospel. Like I said a couple of Sunday's ago – **reading the bible** is one thing, living it is another. You'll never learn how to swim by just studying the strokes. A **song** is not a song unless you sing it. **Love** is only a word until you try it out.

Last Sunday Jesus, comparing himself to the Shepherd, says: **I know my sheep** and mine know me. We have to work at deepening our relationship with Jesus and with others. **Spiritual fruits** are not produced overnight or 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 fruit of love will be evident.

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 is nurtured by the parents love and care for many years after the baby is born. But this love will eventually bear fruit. What a joy it is for the mother and father when 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 bad times as well as good and not for what we can get from Him or merely for sentimental reasons.

Jesus, in today's Gospel, 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. Pruning can be painful. It's not very difficult to love those who love you. But by loving those **who test your patience**, real and lasting fruit is produced.

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