

Fruit That Never Rots

5th Sunday in Easter year B

John 15:1-8

What an amazing passage.

What a *challenging* passage:

challenging to understand and challenging to live.

Let us do a first dissection, so that we might hear the Divine Voice...

Jesus begins by speaking of the mysterious relationship
between He and the Father:

He being the true vine and the Father being the vine grower.

Jesus is speaking from a very particular perspective.

Jesus is actually speaking in reference to *us*.

The Father does not need to prune the Son. They are tight, and quite fine!

Jesus is speaking of Himself as source of life for *others*, for *us*,

who are grafted onto Him like branches onto a vine,

who bear fruit because of the life they receive from the vine.

He is the *true* vine, i.e. *the* vine, source for the branches of *unique* life,

and the Father is lovingly involved in pruning for the sake of much fruit.

The specific focus of Jesus' discourse is this mysterious *fruit*,

that we bear *if we remain in Him* (four times He says "Remain in me"),

and without which we are of little value.

Indeed, the branches that bear no fruit are cut, to become kindling.

Two questions (among many) arise:

1. How do we remain in Jesus so that we bear fruit?
2. What is the fruit that we are to bear?

Jesus makes a daunting statement: "Apart from me you can do nothing."

Now, if I were in an ornery mood (which, of course, is not my style...),

I might respond, "Oh yeah, watch me do something apart from you.

I can do Happy Hour and the lawn and tennis and vacation."

To which Jesus would respond, "Alright; but can you love as I do...?"

Allow me to step a few verses outside of this passage

so to answer our two questions.

In verse 10 of this chapter 15 of John's gospel Jesus tells us

that we remain in Him if we keep His commandments.

In verse 12 He tells us the commandment: “Love one another as I love you.”

Now, I find here that Jesus gets somewhat complicated.

How?

He first tells us that in order to bear fruit, we must remain in Him.

He then tells us that we remain in Him by bearing fruit.

By the way: bearing fruit and keeping His commandment are synonymous.

Which one is it

—remaining in Him to bear fruit or bearing fruit to remain in Him?!?

Well, if, apart from Jesus we can do nothing, i.e. we cannot love in this way,
then it all originates in Him.

We begin by remaining in Him.

Actually we begin by being grafted onto Him

—which is a pure grace, sheer gift.

Once grafted, we are to remain in Him.

How do we remain in Him?

Simply by *wanting* to, by *wanting* it.

It is a question of desire.

If you want it, it is given to you.

It is that simple.

But you must keep wanting, because we never fully arrive.

The arrival is called heaven, and we are not there yet!

We will know when we have arrived.

In the meantime, as Saint Augustine says:

The entire Christian life is in fact an exercise of holy desire.

The fruit that we bear along the way, which glorifies God,

i.e. pleases God and allows God to radiate,

is love for one another.

To be more precise: the fruit is divine love exercised between us.

And so, the more we allow the love of God in our hearts to flow,

and to be victorious over jealousy and anger and bitterness and fatigue,

the more rooted we are in Christ’s heart, source of this love.

It is an ever-deepening cycle.

Jesus makes it possible for us to love in this way,

and the more we say “yes” to it, the closer we are to the source.

It is a win-win.

We only need surrender...

But who does not want to surrender to love?