

Homily April 28, 2018

Sometimes when I am preparing the homily I will go back into my computer file to see what I did with the same set of readings before. I prefer to have a fresh angle. In looking to a previous homily on these readings, yes, I did speak about my blueberries, even though they were not vines. And I found a reference to them being fully in bloom at this time. So one thing I do know about three years ago was that we were having a better springtime. My blueberries are still gradually moving toward the blossom stage, although the weather this week may have moved them closer.

The message of the Gospel is pretty clear, it speaks about the necessity of our ongoing union with Jesus Christ in order to stay alive, grow and bear fruit. We are the branches that must remain connected to Jesus as the vine. But this year I want to focus more on our connection with Jesus as equivalent to our connection to His Body the Church, and it is the connection that puts us in touch with all the gifts and graces of God. The Church of Jesus Christ is the conduit of life just as the plant or vine transmits water and other nutrients.

Beyond the obvious Gospel message about the necessary connection to Jesus is the need to bear fruit. We are not supposed to merely survive as branches on the busy and growing vine, or plant, or tree that is Jesus' active presence in the world, His Church. I think both of our other readings point us to the work and activity of the Church and our role in it.

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles describes the situation shortly after St. Paul's conversion. At first people in the Church were afraid of him because of his previous reputation as a persecutor of Christians. But one member, Barnabas, accepted a special responsibility of putting Paul under his charge. Barnabas demonstrated a kind of missionary discipleship as he welcomed Paul and gave him guidance. And even before that, when Paul had been blinded in His conversion experience He was sent to another Christian for healing and initial instruction. The end result was that Paul then began his work of giving witness to Jesus whom He had come to know and believe in through a special intervention. Jesus initiated a conversion, but Paul was turned over to the members of the Church in order to move forward. The sense of the growth of the Church through the cooperative work of Jesus disciples was aptly described as the Church, being at peace and being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord.

In our second reading from the letter of St. John, we were reminded that we are to love, not simply in word and speech, but in deed and truth. Then He goes on to speak of deeds in terms of obedience to the commandments, especially the commandment to

love on another. It is the love that must be expressed in deeds. They are the deeds we do among our brothers and sisters in the Church. They are the deeds we do for the enrichment of our brothers and sisters beyond the Church.

Each year at this time, as we marvel at the unfolding of new life in plants and trees, moving toward a summer or autumn harvest, we direct our attention to a couple of primary avenues for participating in the fruit bearing of the Church. One is the call to support the Archdiocesan Annual Appeal which is essentially about the financial support of the loving deeds of the Archdiocesan Church, its many apostolates.

Of more immediate attention is our parish ministry fair which is happening this weekend after all the Masses in Conger Hall. It is a great visible celebration of the deeds of love that our brothers and sisters are doing. It also calls us to renew or begin our own participation in one of these ministries that cover a breadth of loving deeds.

At this time I would like to have Noel Saunders (Bob Murati) share a few words on our stewardship of talent that places us at the service of God in our parish and our community.