



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are now more than half way through the Easter Season. It is a good time to start looking at the great feast that closes the season: Pentecost. On Pentecost, we remember how Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, and so formed the Church.

One of my professors in the Seminary used a modern image to describe how the Holy Spirit works in the world – the bungee cord. (Yeah, I know, you've heard me share this before, but it's always good to be reminded.) In this Trinitarian image, God the Father is the Bridge, God the Son is the Diver, and God the Holy Spirit is the Bungee Cord, connecting Bridge to Diver. The Son dives down into our humanity, taking on everything, even our death, but then, because of His connection (the Bungee Cord) with the Father (the Bridge), He springs back up into His Life. So, when we are connected to the Father through the Holy Spirit, we are able to "spring" out of our death, into the eternal life of the Father. In this image, we see an analogy of the truth that God connects us to His Heart through the Holy Spirit.

Today's Gospel has another image of this connection. Jesus says,

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. (John 15: 1-5)

In this beautiful image, Jesus is inviting us to see how close He wants us to be to Him – closer than branches are to the vine! Imagine the sap going from the vine to the branches. This lifeblood of the grapevine is an image of the Holy Spirit moving within us. Of ourselves, we can do nothing – we have no life within us. If we get cut off from Jesus (the vine), then we will no longer have the Spirit moving within us, and we will wither and die. But if we stay connected to Jesus, then we not only will have life, we will bear fruit.

The Holy Spirit wants to bear fruit in your life and my life. He wants us to share the glory to true life with others. As I mentioned in my homily last week, the four essential elements of priestly character are: prayer, mortification, excellent performance in our work, and the apostolate. Prayer connects us to God – it is our relationship with God. Mortification allows us to focus our energy on the Lord. This is the image of being pruned – that we say no to part of ourselves in order to say a giant "YES" to God. Excellent performance is that gift we make of our work to Almighty God, offering Him the unblemished sacrifice of ourselves. The Apostolate is about sharing the Good News with others and so bearing fruit!

All of this – *all of this* – is only possible with the working of the Holy Spirit in our souls. We cannot do it on our own. Without God working in us, we can do nothing!

May we allow the Holy Spirit to keep us grafted onto the vine – Jesus – and so make us good baptismal priests, sharing God's goodness with each person we meet.