

## HOMILY FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN EASTER

Those amongst us who enjoy a drop of wine will be familiar with the grafting of grapevines. That is how new varieties often develop. Grafting vines also has the benefit of improving the health of plants and eradicating certain unwanted properties. When Jesus speaks about our being branches of his vine, it is that we have been grafted to him through Baptism to improve our health and eradicate unwanted properties.

From then onwards, we receive all of the benefits from God which Jesus has achieved for himself – loved, gifted, resurrected and favoured as God’s own children.

However, this is not the only intention of our Baptism. Jesus says at the end of the Gospel reading, “It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.” This is why we are Baptised.

Jesus also speaks about us making our home with him, as he makes his home with us. Grafting vines these days involves particular ways of cutting and dressing the parts to be joined. In the time of Jesus and before, grafting simply involved placing a new plant into the fork of the trunk and the branch of an old plant. The new plant shot its roots into the old plant and created a new branch, bringing the identity of the new plant together with the identity of the old plant. The new plant really made its home with the old plant.

I am sure we all have a sense of what home must be for us. It is usually the place we can be ourselves, where we find trust and love, strength and rejuvenation.

To make ourselves at home with Jesus and, for Jesus to be at home with us, describes the most intimate of relationships. It is to recognise that there are no secrets which can be kept from Jesus; nor can there be any condemnation of ourselves because we are at home with Jesus and he has promised that he has not come to condemn. He had to die to prove this but, prove it he did. It is only for us to make ourselves at home with Jesus in this love.

This also becomes the reason for our fruitfulness. That we who receive mercy, become those who show mercy. We who have a home with Jesus, open our doors to invite others into this experience of mercy.

It’s not always easy to do. Saul arrived in Jerusalem. He had been the great persecutor of the followers of Jesus, quite happy to see them condemned to death. He made his home with Jesus after he was thrown from his horse and blinded, only to be restored to sight at his conversion. Our great fathers of the Church, the Apostles, really didn’t want anything to do with him. It was unbelievable to imagine that Saul had changed.

Barnabas, whose name means, ‘son of consolation’ and ‘son of comfort’ – very homelike values – was the one to help Paul become at home amongst the apostles because Barnabas “took charge of him and introduced him to the apostles”. Homes also need to be places of hospitality. This is a fruit we need to bear.

John wrote in his letter about our love not just being words or mere talk. What kind of home would we be a part of if everyone simply sat and spoke words without committing to action? It’s easy to talk about how the house needs cleaning; how the lawn needs mowing. We celebrated Joseph the Worker yesterday – he wasn’t simply a man of words.

John also reminded us therefore, that God lives in us when we keep his commandments and John tells us what he thinks they are. One is to believe in the name of Jesus Christ – to trust him. The other is to love one another. Fruitfulness comes from these.

It all comes about because God has made a home with us and in us.