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Food for Thought

Gospel: John 15: 1-8

“True Vine and True Branches”



In this week's Gospel, Jesus refers to Himself as the *"True Vine"*, and He presents us with quite a different emphasis - the focus of which is our role within this mystery.

Jesus says: "I am the True Vine and my Father is the vinedresser... I am the vine who feeds and nourishes; you are the branches." Jesus uses the imagery of the vine and the branches to dramatize the intimate, life-giving connection that He offers to those who believe in Him. He promises that if we remain united with Him in faith and love, we will be alive and fruitful. He reminds us that being connected to Him is necessary for healthy growth. But He also tells us that we cannot be connected to Him, without being connected to – and dependent upon - one another.

We are called to Eucharist, *to celebrate Eucharist*; to thank God *together* for the gift of faith: to listen to the living Word, and then to gather at the Table of the Lord to experience reconciliation, renewed hope and joy, and the fullness of life as we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus and celebrate again our identity as members of God's people.

Jesus tells us that our connection to Him is strong. The image of the Vine and Branches tells us that we cannot exist on our own, without sustenance from He who is our Source of Life and Love. And it also tells us that we cannot exist without the support and love of one another. His was pure, unselfish, unconditional love. It was not motivated by fear, or by any self-seeking. His love was given freely, without being earned or merited. He loved sinner and saint, the rich and the poor, the learned and the simple. And he expected nothing in return.

Love is the ultimate connection. This is His "new commandment" - we are not only connected to Him, but to one another. He taught the truth, he spoke words of comfort, he healed the sick, he brought sight to the blind, he rebuked those who needed to be rebuked, he spent much time in prayer and in communion with the Father. Ultimately he laid down his life for His brothers and sisters.

And He invites and calls us to go and do likewise - to love not only in word or speech but in deed and in truth. It is only within the loving support of the community that we maintain our connection with Jesus, the vine, and are assured that His life will continue to flow in us and make us fruitful as his disciples.

