

Fifth Sunday of Easter B - 2021
Acts 9.26-31///1John 3.18-24///John 15.1-8

→it seems as if one day the Pope got tired of being cooped up in the Vatican and so he decided to sneak out and go visit the sick in a nursing home in Rome.

→so on the appointed day...without telling anyone...the Pope snuck out of the Vatican and went on his journey to the nursing home...

→at one point it happened that he entered the room of an old man who showed no excitement or even any recognition that it was the Pope standing there before him...

→somewhat surprised and taken aback the Pope asked him.... “do you know who I am.”

→and the old man looked up and replied... “NO...but if you ask the nurse at the desk she will tell you!”

→now that story is in stark contrast to the way things are today...because these days....we can know everyone and almost anything about them thanks to Facebook and Instagram and all the other media platforms that have become a part of the fabric of society.

PAUSE

→this [evening] morning...we hear about the image of the grapevine in the gospel...how the vine and branches are intimately and necessarily connected...

→and it is from this ancient image that the concept of **the “grapevine”**...the connection between people was born

→in days gone by, the **grapevine** was considered that mysterious connection between people that made it possible for all kinds of information to be passed from one person to another...

→it usually happened over the phone...or between backyard neighbors....or over a cup of coffee...

→today the grapevine has been replaced by the internet and smart phones...and most recently by Zoom and Teams and other virtual means...

→not surprisingly...it was through **the “grapevine”** that the stories of Jesus eventually became our gospel accounts that we have today

→for the first 30 years after Christ was on the earth....knowledge about the events of his life ...his mission.... were primarily spread through **the grapevine** before someone had the insight and sense to write them down.

→the "grapevine" has always been our link to the world, the way we share information and news about each other...whether it was over the fence in the back yard, on the telephone or at the supermarket

→[and] the grapevine still exists today.....but in a much different way than it was in times past

→today's grapevine has changed right before our eyes even in the last year...as we all became familiar with ZOOM, Teams, FaceTime and Snapchat

→and whether we are texting or tweeting, zooming or facetimeing...the grapevine remains the same.

→it can spread information and news instantly...to all points of the globe.... impacting the way we live, communicate, and relate to one another....

→today's grapevine is reshaping our lives...but as it reshapes us...it is also disconnecting us as well....sadly.....the more electronic we get, the more disconnected we get...

→perhaps one of the few positives to come out of the pandemic was the realization that being forced to connect by ZOOM made us realize just how much we need face-to-face interaction with one another....

→you know we call it "the social network or social media" but when you think about it...it is anything but **social**...likewise the pandemic gave birth to a thing called "social distance" but when you think about it there really isn't anything **social** about distancing ourselves from one another...

→and that is why perhaps today's gospel reading is so important to hear and reflect on

→it too uses the imagery of a grapevine, of vine and branches, of shared connections//////////however while today's electronic grapevine under the surface seems to be disconnecting us.....our gospel today tells of our **connection** to one another.... our connection in and through JESUS CHRIST....that CHRIST is the vine and we are the branches...

and I believe that is the point of today's gospel reading.....*PAUSE*

we need to remain connected to CHRIST **and** we need to remain connected to one another

→Jesus tells us... *"I am the vine, God is the vine-grower and you are the branches"*

and so the message is simple, we receive life, our purpose and faith from the vine...from Christ

→because of our baptism, Christ is a part of us and we are a part of Christ [that is why we bless ourselves with holy water each week.....because **we are connected**

and we come here today and every week.....to live and share our connectedness, to Christ and to one another....perhaps we might think of this as our FACETIME ...our ZOOM with Jesus and one another...

PAUSE

→ we live in a different world these days...in some ways...as our world of technology disconnects us, we need to remain connected to Christ, connected to one another and connected to the Church

...the "grapevine" today has a new face to it

→yet today we are being urged to not forget the original grapevine....the grapevine of Christ ...the one that gives us life, purpose, faith and meaning...

→perhaps the second reading from John's letter puts it most clearly when he writes....

→"let us love in deed and in truth and not merely talk about it"

→and maybe...to put it another way...

→the "grapevine" of our lives in which we all participate and are so fond of....really needs to come back to being centered on Christ and on one another

→but for that to happen...

→the words we speak need to be true...

→the actions we do need to be honest...

→the thoughts we think need to be caring...

→and..... the responsibilities we have, the relationships we want, the commitments we make need.....to be real....

but with that type of grapevine in our lives, just think of the good news we could spread.....