



DARE TO DREAM

5th Sunday of Eastertide – United in Faith

Week Beginning 2nd May

Before you begin the prayer...

'I am the vine, you are the branches' is a beautiful image of closeness. Jesus is speaking of the intimacy we are invited to have with him. Jesus was speaking not long before his death and not long before his disciples would scatter and abandon him in when the soldiers came.

In California giant sequoia trees line many roadsides. What is interesting is that the sequoia tree has roots just barely below the surface. We might think that this would be impossible for such large trees. Normally we think of roots growing deep into the ground so that strong winds will not blow the trees over. The sequoia tree, however, only grows in grooves and their roots intertwine under the surface of the earth, so when the strong winds come, they hold each other up. It could be said that the Christian community is like the giant sequoias. When life gets difficult the community will hopefully reach out to those who are struggling and offer the support that is needed to hold a person or people up in the face of adversity.

Vine trees only produce good fruit when the branches are strong. The branches can only be strong when they are connected to the vine. Each feeds the other. It is the same in the Christian community. To function as a community of believers we need the strength of Christ at the centre of our lives. We depend on Christ so that we may have the life within us that leads us to not only acknowledge the presence of others but to reach out to them in their need. The mandate given to the disciples just before Jesus ascends to the Father was to 'Go make disciples of all the nations' This is our mandate too; given to us at the end of every Mass; 'Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.' We, as a community of believers, united in faith with one another, are sent outwards to share the good news and to witness to it in our lives.

Video - Watch and listen to Mgr. Liam Slattery

Prayerfully read this passage from the Gospel of John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.

- Take some to ponder on the words you have just read.
- Notice if there is anything, a word or phrase that stands out for you.
- Read the passage again and then reflect upon all or some of these questions: if you are doing this as a family or a group, make sure everyone is given the opportunity to speak.

Personal Reflections

- What is your sense of community? What communities do you belong to and why do you choose to belong to them?
- The pandemic has had an impact on every member of society. During this time have you felt connected to people in your community? Has this included your parish community? If so, what did you gain from this connectivity? What were you able to offer?

Now thinking about your parish and local community

- Pope Francis writes in his book, 'Let us Dream', *'No one can face life in isolation... We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together...'* Thinking about your parish/deanery do you have a community that supports and helps one another?

- Do you have a community which is intent on looking ahead – is it outward looking and committed to serving the wider world? What would make it better?
- Does your community appreciate the need to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth?
- What, as a community, are your dreams for the future of the Church?

Action

- Invite your parishioners to share their dreams for the Church and your own parish/deanery.
- Create a book or board to display these dreams.
- Consider which of these dreams connect most with the vision of a **'Future Full of Hope'** and as a community start to determine how you can bring these dreams to fruition.

Finish with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit for the grace to respond.

