

Easter 5B John 15: 1-8 The Vine –

The Gospel reading for today talks about being grounded in Christ through the imagery of the vine and the branches. To be sure, Jesus is talking about building the foundation of our life on Him and the rock of his Word. And what better place for that foundation to be laid than in the home. So, on this Mother's Day, I want to talk about building a house of life in the context of the family.

I'm sure that most of you have heard or read Robert Fulghum's "All I Really Need to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten." It appeared in a number of different places, before it became the anchor piece in his best-selling book.

I quote a part of it now:

"All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate-school mountain, but there in the sandpile at Sunday School. These are the things I learned:

Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Take a nap every afternoon. Be aware of wonder.

Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the styrofoam cup -- they all die. So do we.

Think what a better world it would be if we all -- the whole world -- had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap. Or, if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

And it is still true, no matter how old you are -- when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together." **End of quote.** Isn't that something?

It's a touching, beautiful, and poignant piece because it is so profoundly true. We all know that the early years of a child are so important. Our attitudes, our personalities, our values, our habits, our principles -- perhaps above all, our self-esteem -- and to some degree, our IQ's, are shaped powerfully by what happens to us in the first years of early childhood.

So, what foundations are we to lay for the house we are building in our Christian families both at home and at church. We need to teach and show love, and to instill the importance of hope in our daily lives.

The imagery as Jesus being the vine and we being the branches speaks to us still today. As parents we become the vines and our children the branches. This is what mothers and fathers are to teach - To make love known, and to always have hope. To always be connected to each other in Christian love.

If we take our baptismal promises seriously we need to remember that we have been grafted into the life of Christ. To graft a branch onto a vine you must cut open the vine, and then you need to take the broken branch and place it in the open vine.

Jesus was cut open, his hands, his feet, his side, and then the source of his life, his blood became available, his life blood nourishes us. When we stray our branch becomes wilted and

eventually will die if we do not return and become nourished in Christ once again. If we are the branches we must continue in our Christian duty to love and to be loved and to pass that on to others. It is a journey of many steps made possible only by commitment and effort and faithfulness.

That ongoing journey is what we mean by sanctification, of becoming Holy. It is living out our conversion. It is saying yes many times after our first yes.

When Jesus asks us to dwell in him He asks not only for a meeting with us but also for our dwelling or remaining with him. To dwell with our Lord, to give Our Lord quality time in our lives is the test of our claim to be a follower. When and only when we are ready to give that time, we discover what it means to share in the flow of grace coming from his presence in our lives.

There is a story of a gardener who had a cucumber plot. He had the best seed, planted at the proper depth. He fertilized and watered the plants, he worked the soil faithfully each week to prevent weeds from encroaching and he sprayed to prevent bugs and blights from afflicting the young plants.

Then one day he noticed that here and there certain leaves were dying, certain blooms fading. Most of the leaves remained a healthy glossy green but scattered among them were those turning brown. So we began to investigate.

He traced the ones on which the leaves and blooms were dying until he found that they were all connected to a single stem, there just above the ground, cut worms had severed the stalk. The entire vine above that point was dying because it was no longer attached to the roots and the stem that had produced it.

This story reminds us that we die spiritually, and that we are incapable of producing fruit when we are not attached to the vine, or when we are not connected to the roots which nourish us. When situations get in the way of gathering for worship, we need to know that Christ wants us to be in communion not only with him but with others, to gather together, not on the golf course or the ball field or wherever but as he commanded us to do, to be together as one in worship.

Therefore it is so important to be in the right place. The place that our Lord has prepared for us. That is to be in the vine that God planted – the vine that we call Christ.

To remain a part of the vine we must obey all the Commandments, when we Love God, ourselves and each other, when we forgive and trust each other, when we are willing to be seen with the rest of the branches on the vine, we remain a part of the vine and produce fruit.

To be sure, Jesus is talking about building the foundation of our life on Him and the rock of his Word. This day let us become both the branch for Christ and also the vine for all that we nurture as Christ's disciples in our daily lives. May your branch always be connected to the one from whom all life flows – that being our Creator, Our God Amen.