

## Reflection for the Liturgy of the Word

May 13, 2020

Acts 15:1-6 / John 15:1-8

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It has been said that the first book of Scripture is not a spoken or written word, but nature. Meister Eckhart wrote,

“Anyone who truly knows creatures can be excused from listening to sermons for every creature is full of God and is a book.”

It seems that Jesus understood that very well as we find him often going to the stuff of nature to help his listeners get some understanding of God as he had come to know God. Images like:

- Living water
- Birds of the air
- A mother hen
- Bread and wine
- Vine and branches

Although Jesus did not use the word “sacrament,” that word came to mind as I thought about these images and, in particular, that of the vine and branches that we heard in today’s Gospel.

I recently read a sacrament described as “any person, place, or event, any sight, sound, taste, touch, or smell that causes us to notice the love which supports all that exists.”

The life that flows through the vine so deeply rooted in the rich loam of Earth, nourishing the branches that produce the fruit, warmed by the sun and blessed by the rain. Doesn’t that speak of the “love that supports all that exists?” And yes, there is pruning and yes, there are branches that are not as fruitful and yes, there are harsh storms that batter the vine and branches and fruit.

And still, does that not all speak, in the end, of the “love that supports all that exists?”

Reflecting on the flow of life through the vine and the branches, Cynthia Bergeault writes:

“We flow into God—and God into us—because it is the nature of love to flow. And as we give ourselves into one another in this fashion, the vine gives life and coherence to the branch while the branch makes visible what the vine is. ...

The whole and the part live together in mutual, loving reciprocity, each belonging to the other and dependent on the other to show forth the fullness of love. That’s Jesus’ vision of no separation between human and Divine.”

... The vine gives life and coherence to the branch while the branch makes visible what the vine is ... Love, the source of all that is.

These challenging times are so in need of that love made visible. As we have been reminded so often, Christ has no body now but ours.

Living in Michigan as spring unfolds around us is a beautiful reminder that something new is always coming to life!

- the sound of the red wing blackbird on the reeds of the pond;
- the sighting of the first egret wading in the river;
- the geese and their goslings;
- the trees decked out in pink, white and lavender;

and the vines with their branches ... you and I bringing forth the fruit that will last.

And so we hear and answer the invitation –

Live on in me as I do in you ... remain in my love ...

For in doing so, God will be glorified as you become my disciples.