

A homily preached by the Rev. Robert L. Hart, Easter 5, May 10, 2009, Acts 8: 26-40, Psalm 22: 24-30, I John 4: 7-21, John 15: 1-8

On Easter Sunday I reflected on the fact that the cross on the old high altar has vines cast into the brass, twinning up the vertical beam and across the horizontal bar. In fact you'll find vines on the processional cross, around the edge of the marble floor of the chancel and even growing up the walls of the choir and sanctuary. There are grape vines and bunches of grapes on the altar rail. Jesus was undoubtedly thinking of the grape vine in his teaching to the disciples. "I am the vine, you are the branches." The grape vine was very familiar and important to his hearers. Its fruit is both for the eating and for the making of wine.

As we hear Jack and Tony speak this morning, we are witnessing the good fruit of the vine. The image of the vine Jesus uses in his teaching reminds us of the importance of community and of staying connected. Jack and Tony belong to the community of their families, their friends, their schools, their sports teams, their volunteer activities and, of course, to the community of God, Christ Church.

It's as crucial to all of us as it is to these high school seniors to remember that we don't bear good fruit if we become disconnected from God, family, friends and the communities created by every worthwhile activity we undertake. The life of the branches flows from the roots to the stem and into every branch, big and small. God's love is life. The love of our parents and families is life. The love of this body of worshippers is life. The love of friends and associates is life. Jesus reminds us to stay connected, to abide in him just as he abides in us, bringing life and goodness.

We can see that Tony and Jack are part of the vine. Our deepest prayer is that you and all the seniors and youth of this parish stay connected to God in Christ and to all the life-giving communities that you will be a part of throughout your life. The life that flows through the vine is already bearing fruit in your lives. May it ever be so. And on this Mothers' Day remember the vine of which you are a branch. Thank your Mother. She deserves it. She loves you.