

JESUS IS THE VINE AND WE ARE THE BRANCHES

It is amazing how our society has evolved. Our connection to a cell phone has opened a door that at times seems limitless. While different providers will speak of networks and speed, what is essential to all of them is the connection. Staying connected means staying informed. Young people are on social media a lot making sure they are not being left out of something. Even in a pandemic connection is powerful. There seems to be an app for everything. One can point the phone at a tree and the phone will tell you the name of that tree or plant. It can do the same for constellations of stars at night. For some it provides sales connection for employment, for others, it provides wellness checks. When there is no connection, what happens? Does anyone know anyone's phone number or do we just press the button? It is amazing. It is a powerful connection. There are great apps to pray morning and evening prayer in the breviary and the IConfess App that includes access to the Act of Contrition as well as good examinations of conscience. In this time in history, what is recorded changes lives, all from the power of a cell phone.

With this as our new experience, how do we enter the powerful analogy of today's Gospel? Jesus tells us not only that He is the vine and we are the branches, but without Him, we can do nothing. That is what resonates with the difference between the cellular connection world and our relationship with our Lord. How do we stay connected to Him? How do we rely on Him? For me, this connection must be different, it must be redemptive in nature. Many things capture our hearts, tug at our hearts, but the emotional connection that nothing can be done apart from this relationship speaks to a depth of reliance. How well do we rely on God? While the power of this connection is different for everyone, for me it comes when I enter those places where I have experienced the undeniable presence of God. It happened on the ball field when I sat on the bench of an empty playing field thinking about the priesthood. Every so often I still go back to a Little League diamond and reconnect to that spirit, that discernment time, and the inner depth of that call. Being at that place evokes what I know to be true, my connection with God. It happens on the golf course when I get out alone by myself, early in the morning. The rhythm of following the ball, witnessing the mist on the creek, listening to the strike of the ball as it is hit by the club gifts me with peace. When I get there, I can take a deep breath and know God is God. The breaking of the Eucharist during the Lamb of God is another powerful connection. I know Jesus broke it so everyone would have a piece of Him. Unbroken nothing can be shared. At that moment, touching the Body of Christ, breaking it so that we all may be fed is a place of profound love. He responds to my hunger and I receive reassurance that He cares. I feel loved at this moment.

This kind of connection is different than what we experience in the clear word, as powerful and great as that can be. This vine and branches analogy is to move us to a place of growth, reassurance, and life. It is powerful to know we can do nothing without Him.



Father John Ouper