

With the revolution in information technology, getting connected to people today is easier than ever before. It takes me just a push of a button or click of a mouse to get connected to my people halfway around the world. A few years ago, it was unthinkable. In 1983 when I first came to USA I could not connect to my people by phone and waited 3-4 months for a letter to arrive. What a change now!

But regardless of what technology you are using, whether it is cellular, satellite, cable, or even the now “old fashioned” phone line, a communication technology is only as good as its connection. It only paves the way for flow of information but will not connect the hearts.

Main theme of this Sunday is being connected in order to bear fruits.

The first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, testifies to the abundance of spiritual fruits yielded by the apostles because of their close bond with the risen Lord. The reading tells us how the Lord pruned the former Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, a fanatic who had persecuted the Church, to produce a fruit-bearing branch called Paul, the zealous Apostle to the Gentiles, entirely dedicated to the proclamation of the Gospel. Even Paul’s forced return to Tarsus for a brief period is an example of God’s pruning of the vine to bring forth a greater harvest, namely, the mission to the Gentiles.

In the Gospel, this Sunday we again get one of those I AM statements of Jesus as part of the last supper discourse. Last Sunday, we heard I am the good shepherd. This Sunday we hear I am the vine statement. Jesus uses this favorite image of the vine and branches to help his disciples understand the closeness of their relationship with him and the necessity of their maintaining it.

I have never been to Holy Land. So, I do not know if they still have vineyards now or not. But vineyards must have been a very common sight in Israel. So, in the OT prophets speak about Israel as God's vineyard. Jesus also uses vineyards in his parables about kingdom of God.

In today's Gospel Jesus talks about not the whole vineyard but a single vine. People of his time were very well aware that for a vine to produce fruits needed to be pruned and its branches needed to be connected with the vine. Pruning is done in order to allow the vine to grow only in certain direction. Pruning is done to cut off those shoots and branches which are useless and do not bear fruits.

Jesus compares himself with the vine and says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned” (vs. 5-6).

Of course, what is true of vine and grapes is also true of any other fruit trees or any other fruit bearing plants. Last year when I grew bottle gourd, I had to prune regularly and cut off some branches. As a result, I had a bumper crop of bottle gourd and the size of bottle gourd I got, I had not even seen in India.

At your baptism you were connected to Christ and his life saving work. Through various sacraments Jesus prunes us and nourishes us so, that we will be able to bear fruits in abundance.

If we stay connected with Jesus, the vine, we will be able to bear fruits of love, service, kindness, forgiveness, kindness, compassion and so on. If we are not bearing such fruits then our connection to the vine may not be good one or it may be very slow one, only 2 G or 3G connection. Speed up your connection to 5G by prayers and use of sacraments especially the sacrament of Eucharist.

Allow God to prune those unnecessary shoots in your life which spring up time to time and hurt your fruitfulness. Maybe we need pruning so that our spiritual plant will grow in right direction.