

HOMILY
4TH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES
(DEACON RON)

IN THE GOSPEL WE HEAR JESUS SPEAK OF HIMSELF AS THE VINE AND WE AS THE BRANCHES. NOW TO AN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY OF FARMERS IN JESUS'S DAY THIS A COMMON SITE. BUT PERHAPS IT'S MEANING MAY NEED SOME UPDATING TO OUR CULTURE AND TIMES TO AUGMENT THE WEIGHT OF WHAT HE WAS SAYING.

IF WE DO SOMETHING SUCH AS THAT IT MIGHT SOUND LIKE THIS. JESUS WOULD SAY THAT "I AM THE ELECTRICAL POWER STATION AND YOU ARE THE RELAYS THROUGH WHICH MY POWER FLOWS." NOW WHEN THERE IS A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN BOTH, POWERFUL THINGS CAN HAPPEN- HOUSES AND BUILDINGS ARE LIT UP, COMPUTERS ZIP THROUGH AN UNTOLD NUMBER TASKS AS TAKE US PLACES WHERE WE CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE, PEOPLE ARE HEALED, PEOPLE ARE SET FREE OF PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS, AND SO ON. BUT IF THE RELAY BREAKS AT ANY POINT, ONE OR EVERYTHING OF THESE WILL STOP.

FOR EXAMPLE At 5:27 p.m., November 9, 1965, the entire Northeast area of the United States and large parts of Canada went dark for hours on end. From Buffalo to the eastern border of New Hampshire and from New York City to Ontario, a massive power outage struck without warning. Trains were stuck between subway stops. Airports shut down. People were trapped in elevators. Failed traffic signals stopped traffic dead snarling it up for hours. By 5:40 p.m., 13 minutes later, 80,000 square miles of the

Northeast United States and Ontario, Canada, were without power, leaving 30 million people in the dark. It took six days to locate the cause. The Federal Power Commission investigators found a single faulty relay at A RELAY STATION in Ontario, Canada, which caused a initial key transmission line to disconnect.

JESUS CANNOT STOP THE FLOW OF POWER NO MORE THAN AN ELECTRICAL STATION CAN STOP GENERATING ELECTRICITY, BUT WE CAN BREAK THE CONNECTION TO IT BY

BECOMING FAULTY. AND ONCE IT IS BROKEN, LITTLE CAN BE DONE BY US TO ENABLE THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO COME ONE EARTH UNTIL IT IS REPAIRED.

JESUS EXAMPLE OF THE VINES AND THE BRANCHES ALSO REMINDS ME ABOUT SOME OF THINGS I DO AROUND MY GARDEN TO GET CERTAIN TYPES OF PLANTS TO GROW WELL FROM YEAR TO YEAR. FOR EXAMPLE WE HAVE CLEMATIS VINES WHICH GIVE BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS EVERY SPRING. BUT IN THE FALL THEY MUST BE CUT BACK. HOWEVER, DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF CLEMATIS, I HAVE TO CUT THEM BACK DIFFERENTLY. SOME GET CUT TO WITHIN AN INCH OR TWO OF THE GROUND AND OTHERS MUST BE CUT MUCH LESS THAN THAT. KNOWING HOW TO PRUNE THEM BACK DETERMINES HOW WELL THEY WILL DO THE FOLLOWING SPRING..

FOR MOST PLANTS THAT COME BACK YEAR AFTER YEAR INCLUDING VINES AND GRAPE

ARBORS A LOT OF HARD WORK EACH SPRING NEEDS TO GO ON UNDER THE EARTH IN ORDER TO RESTART THE CYCLE OF LIVING. ALL THE GARDENER CAN DO IS WAIT AND BE PATIENT FOR THE PROCESS TAKES PLACE.

I USE THE GARDENING IMAGES OF PRUNING AND THE WORK THAT GOES ON UNDER THE GROUND TO REMIND US OF HOW THE Spirit WORKS IN OUR LIVES. OFTEN TO BRING US TO BEAR GOOD FRUIT WE NEED TWO THINGS. WE NEED TO BE PRUNED OF THE THINGS IN OUR LIVES WHICH DRAW US AWAY FROM GOD, WHO IS OUR MAIN SOURCE.

IN GARDENING, SOME PLANTS LIKE ROSE SEND OFF LONG STRANGELY-LOOKING BRANCHES WHICH WE “SUCKERS”. THEY DEplete THE LIFE OF THE PLANT AND PROVIDE LITTLE IN THE WAY OF A FLOWER OR FRUIT. OUR READINGS TODAY INVITE US TO CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT WHAT ARE THE “SPIRITUAL SUCKERS” WHICH CAN ATTACHED THEMSELVES TO US AND DRAW US AWAY FROM A LIFE IN CHRIST : MONEY, POSSESSION, EXPECTATIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, JOBS, HEALTH, EVEN THINGS LIKE MINISTRIES. ANYTHING WHICH TAKES

OUR FOCUS FROM THE SOURCE OF OUR POWER CAN BECOME “SPIRITUAL SUCKER” DRAWING US AWAY FROM GOD’S LIFE.

ONCE THE Spirit HAS DONE THE PRUNING, THEN THE NEXT IMPORTANT WORK WHICH NEEDS TO BE DONE IS THE PREPARATION FOR THE “SPIRITUAL SPRINGTIME” **THE TIME OF THE AWAKENING.** LIKE IN NATURE, THIS WORK MUST BE DONE IN THE DARK, THE

DARK MYSTERY OF OUR SOULS FOR THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN US AND GOD BEGINS. SO OFTER IT HAS BEEN WITNESSED TO THAT IT WAS IN THE DARKEST MOMENTS OF OUR LIVES THAT OUR GREATEST MOMENT OF CONVERSION HAPPENED. THE WORK OF THE HOLY Spirit BEGINS ITS CALL DEEP WITHIN US, CALLING US TO PRAYER AND REFLECTION. FOR IT IS ONLY THROUGH THESE TWO ACTIONS, PRAYER AND REFLECTION, THAT WE CAN HEAR THE “WORD OF GOD, JESUS” SPEAKING TO US. TO AVOID SUCH WORK, TO THINK WE CAN DO THE WORK OF GOD WITHOUT THEM IS A DELUSION. FOR WITHOUT THIS MOST IMPORTANT WORK OF THE SOUL, THE CONNECTION TO OUR PRIMARY LIFE FORCE CANNOT HAPPEN. JESUS WAS VERY CLEAR ABOUT THIS WHEN HE SAID “IF (NOTE A WORD WHICH REQUIRES OUR DECISION) IF YOU REMAIN IN ME, AND (IF) (AGAIN OUR CHOICE) MY WORDS REMAIN IN YOU, ASK FOR WHATEVER YOU WANT AND IT WILL BE DONE FOR YOU.” OF COURSE WHAT COULD WE WANT AT SUCH A LEVEL BUT THE COMING OF GOD’S KINGDOM ON EARTH.

NOW THAT PHRASE *THE COMING OF GOD’S KINGDOM* OFTEN IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD, BECAUSE WE THINK IT IS ONLY ONE THING. BUT AT EACH STAGE OF OUR LIVES, THAT *COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH*, MUST COME FIRST WITHIN US AND THEREFORE, IT WILL MEAN DIFFERENT THINGS FOR EACH OF US. FOR EXAMPLE, AT ONE STAGE IN OUR LIVES, OUR GROWTH, OUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT, IT MAY MEAN TURNING AWAY FROM GATHERING POSSESSIONS AND TURNING MORE TOWARD SHARING. AT

ANOTHER STAGE IT MAY MEAN LETTING GO OF HURTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS, AND TURNING TOWARD FORGIVENESS AND HOPE. AT YET AT ANOTHER POINT STILL IT MAY MEAN TURNING AWAY FROM DESPAIR AND ANGER AND TURNING TOWARD A WILLINGNESS TO TRUST IN THE ULTIMATE GOODNESS OF GOD'S WAYS.

BY SUCH ACTIONS AS THE PRUNING AND THE WORK DEEP IN OUR SOULS WE BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE NEW GROWTH. THE GROWTH FIRST OCCURS DEEP WITHIN US AND THEN GRADUALLY EXPANDS FAR OUTSIDE OF US. SO FAR SOMETIMES THAT WE MAY NEVER SEE THE RESULTS, THE FRUIT OF OUR ACTIONS. BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER FOR VINE DOESN'T WORRY ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE ITS FRUIT WILL FEED BUT RATHER FOCUS ON THE WORK OF BEARING ALL OF THE FRUIT OF WHICH IT IS CAPABLE.

"THERE WAS A LEGEND ONCE CONCERNING A SAINT WHOSE WONDERFUL DEEDS ASTONISHED EVEN THE ANGELS. SO MUCH SO THAT THEY WISHED TO LEARN THE SOURCE OF THE SAINT'S HOLINESS. THE ANGELS ASKED GOD THAT THE SAINT MIGHT BE GRANTED THE GIFT OF MIRACLES AND GOD CONSENTED. THEN THEY ASKED THE SAINT IF HE WOULD LIKE BY THE TOUCH OF HIS HANDS TO HEAL THE SICK AND HE REPLIED "NO". "I WOULD RATHER GOD SHOULD DO THAT" SAID THE SAINT. THEN THEY ASKED THE SAINT "WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONVERT GUILTY SOULS AND BRING THEM BACK TO

THE RIGHT PATHS.” AGAIN HE REPLIED “NO, DEFINITELY NOT.” “IT IS THE SPIRITS MISSION TO CONVERT, I CAN ONLY PRAY FOR IT.” A FINAL TIME tHEY ASKED “WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A MODEL OF PATIENCE AND DRAW PEOPLE TO YOU BY YOUR PIETY?” “NO” REPLIED THE SAINT, “IF PEOPLE ARE ATTRACTED TO ME, THEY MAY BECOME ESTRANGED FROM GOD.” A LITTLE PERPLEXED AND EXASPERATED AT THE SAINT’S RELUCTANCE THEY ASKED “WHAT DO YOU DESIRE THEN?” THE SAINT THOUGHT FOR A LONG WHILE AND THEN SAID “I DESIRE THAT

GOD WOULD GIVE ME HIS GRACE SO THAT I MIGHT DO A GREAT DEAL OF GOOD WITHOUT EVERY KNOWING IT.” THE ANGELS WERE INITIALLY CONFUSED BY THE SAINT’S REQUEST BUT FINALLY THEY RESOLVED THAT WHEREVER THE SHADOW OF THE SAINT SHOULD FALL

AND WHERE HE COULD NOT SEE IT, THE SHADOW SHOULD HAVE THE POWER TO CURE DISEASE AND COMFORT THE SORROWFUL. AND SO IT CAME TO PASS, THAT AS THE SAINT

PASSED ALONG THE ROAD OF LIFE THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE WERE CHEERED WHEREVER HE WALKED AND HE NEVER KNEW WHAT WONDERS THAT HAD HAPPENED AS HE PASSED BY.

IT IS EXPECTED BY GOD THAT WE WILL BEAR GOOD FRUIT. IT CAN ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED IF JESUS REMAINS WITH IN US AND HIS WORDS LIVE IN US. FOR THEN,

AND ONLY THEN, DO WE ALLOW THIS POWER OF GOD TO FLOW THROUGH US ONTO
THOSE WE ENCOUNTER. THEN, AND ONLY THEN, “DO WE BEAR MUCH FRUIT AND
BECOME MORE FULLY HIS DISCIPLES.”