

Our Branchness Fifth Week of Easter Wednesday, April 27, 2016 8:15 AM
Acts 15:1-6; Jn 15:1-8 (Part of responding to God is letting go of the categories that we think are essential.)

“Unless you are circumcised according to Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved.”

We have here in the Acts of the Apostles **a paradigm for life in the Church. God is doing something new, and people protest.** This is a perfect example of sewing a new patch on an old garment. The Holy Spirit is spreading the word of God and the gospel of God to all peoples regardless of their origin, and some people protest: this cannot be; we have to stay within the boundaries that we understand to be the word of God, the will of God, orthodoxy, or whatever you want to call it.

Now part of responding to God is letting go of the categories that we think are essential because the problem is the categories that we think are essential are part of us; they are not part of God. **God doesn't need our categories,** our boxes, our files. God is perfectly free to work in new and completely unheard of ways, and does. **It's our responsibility to read the word of God, to sense what God is doing, and to go along with it, not to judge it according to our preconceived ideas.** But that is exactly what people do.

In the gospel, Jesus talks about the relation between him and his disciples as vine to branch. That's a very interesting comparison. **A branch is really part of the vine.** It has to remain part of the vine, and therefore if the human persons who are disciples of Jesus are branches, we have to become aware of our being part of something else, something much bigger than our own “branchness.” And if we fail to do that, we become expendable.

That's the other side of this. **“My Father prunes away every barren branch.”** We know that just because people were baptized does not mean they become faithful disciples of Christ. We know that just because people go through certain stages of, shall we say, religious instruction

that they become thereby faithful members of the Church. **Something else is needed: a connection, an awareness, a willingness, a consciousness, an obedience to something bigger—to the vine—a willingness to be, if you will, a conduit of the life of the vine bearing fruit in the world.**

This means **we are not in the driver's seat.** We cannot control the world or our own lives from our own heads. So our ideas have to be put into the backseat. They are not in the driver's seat. **God is in the driver's seat.** Jesus describes himself as the vine; his Father is the vine grower. The Holy Spirit is the action of God in the life of the world. We have to become attentive to all that, obedient to it, subservient to it, not thinking we know.