**Homily for the 5th Sunday of Easter***Rev. Francis D. Kim*

 This is a great time of the year when trees are beginning to bud, plants are flowering, and grass is starting to turn green. This is the time of year when people put a great deal of work into their yards and gardens, raking out what is left of last years’s fallen leaves and dead twigs, bundling it all for the trash. Everything that is dead is removed to make way for new planting and fresh growth.

        Is it possible that we who are now children of God will someday find ourselves like those broken branches or crumpled leaves that people put into trash bags?

        It is possible if we let ourselves be separated from God. Just as branches get separated from trees, we can become separated from God. Jesus says He is the true vine. A person who does not live in Him is like a withered branches ready for the fire.

        Those leaves and branches that were once the glory of nature, the thrill of spring a while ago, are now an eyesore. They became separated from their source of life and died. When we become detached from our source of life, Jesus Christ, we die spiritually. He says, “Without Me, you can do nothing.”

        In today’s Gospel, He speaks of the life-giving connection between the vine and the branches. This Gospel is very much a Gospel of hope. As Christians, God puts His life-giving force within us. “I am the true vine, and you are the branches,” Jesus says. And, the life of God flows into us and nourishes us.

        We need to stay in contact with living Christ. How? How can we make it? We can do so through the Sacraments of the Church. We know how Jesus feeds us with His own Body and Blood, the consecrated bread and wine we eat and drink during Holy Communion.

        We also stay in contact with the living Christ by nurturing our prayer life. We all need a personal prayer life. And, we also stay in Christ through expression of our faith in works of charity toward others.

        What about a person who has no contact with the Church, who seldom prays, and whose claimed faith has absolutely nothing to do with how he or she lives life? Jesus says that such a person will be thrown out like a dead branch.

        If during this Easter season you have been somehow moved to pray more often, there is still life within you. If during this Easter season your conscience has spoken to you about changing your way of life, there is still life within you. If during this Easter season you have had the desire to set things right with the Church and others, there is still life within you. If during this Easter season you want to come closer to God, there is still life within you. If you want to begin again with the Lord, then you are not yet a dead branch. You are still connected to the vine.

        This is a good time to learn from nature. The branches of a grapevine intertwine with each other branch and support each other. As a community and as Christians, our lives are intertwine with each other, and we support each other. From these branches comes an abundance of fruit. This is our Christian life. Then, as Jesus promised, “We remain in Him, and He remains in us always.”

        If you stay connected to the vine, you will bear much fruit, more than you ever imagined. What a loving God is our God!