

**"I am the vine, you are the branches. If anyone remains in me and I in them, they will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing."**

Everyone here today entered this world attached to someone, and that someone was your mother. Through an umbilical cord you drew life from her, nourishment and health and strength. While you remained within her and attached to her you continued to grow until you were ready to be born and see the light of day. We honour our mothers on this Mothers' Day.

Jesus uses a similar image about us as Christians. He describes being a Christian as being attached to him, like a branch is attached to a vine. **"I am the vine; you are the branches"**. To be a Christian is to draw life from Jesus, to be connected and attached to him, grafted into him, and to draw from all the love and forgiveness and strength he has to give you.

When he was baptised, Aston was grafted into the Vine this morning. He was joined to Jesus Christ inseparably. Baptism does that, it joins or connects your life to the life of Christ who died for you on Good Friday, was raised to life at Easter and who lives for you now and reconnects you with God. Aston has been attached to the one who can and has now given him eternal life. He is connected to the one who wants to continually feed his life, his relationship with God with a constant flow of forgiveness and love.

When we were born the cord that joined us to our mothers was detached. Eventually the time comes when we have to grow up on our own, and we need to take responsibility for feeding ourselves and looking after our own lives. We are no longer attached to our mothers like we once were, but we were still very much attached to their love and still dependent on them for many years. In some ways most of us will always have a special attachment to our mothers, that's why we honour them today.

There is a sense as Christians that we also need to grow up. We don't just believe because our parents may have believed and spoke it for us when we were baptised, but we can say "I believe" just as we did today. And we also need to take responsibility for feeding our own faith, hearing the word of God, and receiving the meal of communion, so that God can keep our relationship with him alive. But in another sense we never become independent. We never lose our need for and our dependence on Jesus Christ. In fact the opposite is true. To grow up as a Christian is to realise more and more just how much we depend on God for everything we need in life, and dependent on Jesus Christ for God's forgiveness and eternal life.

Jesus said: **"If anyone remains in me and I in them, they will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing."** We are not just meant to become attached to Christ at our baptism we are meant to remain attached to him. The word "remain" can also mean abide, and to stay connected. It is used 7 times in today's Gospel. Remain in Christ, abide, stay connected with him. Often we end up attaching ourselves to other things as substitutes for God. We draw life, in fact we try to suck the life out of the things of this world to make ourselves feel better. Money, people and things we love to do and buy, even people in our lives like family become more significant in our lives than God who gave those things and people to us. But eventually we end up being left dry, dead inside. Jesus warns **"If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers"**. What do you call a branch that is cut off from the vine? - a stick. When we don't remain in Christ, living by faith in him, looking to him and listening to his words and feeding from him at his meal, when we attach ourselves elsewhere and draw life without Jesus Christ the danger is

we become spiritual sticks. In other words dead. We have the appearance of being alive but we are dead inside as far as God is concerned.

Life, life with God and eternal life comes from remaining attached to Christ.

**“If anyone remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit”**. That’s what God wants, not a stick but a fruitful vine, a child of God who remains attached to him through Jesus and who and grows as one of his disciples. Christians are meant to stay close to Jesus Christ and he promises as we do it will show by the way we live. The Bible says that fruit will include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. It also includes being a part of God’s mission in the world to bring people back into relationship with him through Jesus Christ. Our best fruit is always imperfect but when it comes from faith, from our connection to Christ, God celebrates it. **“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”**

**“Apart from me you can do nothing”** Jesus said. The church needs to hear that. All the things we do here are nothing unless they come from our relationship with Christ. Mothers need to here that today too. You can do so much, give of yourselves in so many ways, wear yourselves out caring for your families, but apart from your relationship with him Jesus says it is nothing in terms of fruit for him.

Mothers, if you are going to bear fruit for Christ in your family then you need nourishing yourselves. I am not just talking about facials and weekend escapes and shopping therapy and an annual Mothers Day to put your feet up. You need time out with God, time with Jesus, listening to his word, letting him love you and forgive you and speak to you. You need communion with him. There are so many demands on you to do and be everything for your homes that the danger is you neglect what is essential for your spiritual life. You can do and do and do and yet your spirit dries up inside. When you lose touch with Christ it will show and when you remain in Christ and his words it will also show.

Jesus offers you and everyone who remains attached to him and his words in faith this promise: **“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you”**. Jesus encourages you to pray, to ask. But what are you to ask God for as a mum, a Christian mum? Jesus isn’t offering you a blank cheque to ask for a new dishwasher or wardrobe or overseas holiday. He doesn’t promise that everything will go perfectly in life for your children either. But **“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you”**. Jesus does promise to do whatever comes from your remaining in him and his words. When you are in tune with what he wants he promises to work to that end. And what does he want most for your children? – that they too are attached to him and remain attached to him or become reconnected to him again. He wants you to pray for the spiritual well-being of your children. That they know God loves and forgives them, that Christ died for them, and that they believe in him too. Don’t stop praying for that and don’t stop believing he is at work, sometimes through you and sometimes through other people. Pray also that you will bear the kind of fruit in your life in the home and family that will help your children and grandchildren see Christ most clearly and not hinder them. Ask him to prune from your life anything that gets in the way of your witness to your children and anyone for that matter.

It isn’t easy being a mother today. It probably never has been. This morning Jesus reminds us how vital it is for you and all of us to remain attached to him. Grafted into him, hanging on to him in faith, listening to his words and believing them and depending on them, he promises we will bear fruit for him including in our homes. Our lives will be flavoured by him and through us he will grow his family.