

Fifth Wednesday of Easter ~ 5/9

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit." (John 15:1-2)

Right outside my office, lovely Rose of Sharon bushes were planted several years ago. Early this spring the horticulturist cut back the shrubs. After he finished all that remained were the main branches and even they had been reduced to half their original size. The image that came to mind as I looked at what remained of the bush was that of a small boy who goes into the barber shop with a full head of hair and comes out with a total buzz job, nothing left but the vague impression of hair. Looking at the Rose of Sharon I thought that our gardener had gotten carried away. Surely he had cut the branches too drastically. Yet in the last couple of weeks I have noticed new leaves emerging everywhere and it is obvious that the bushes will be full and healthy once again. The birds will once again build nests and the honeybees will come again this year to gather nectar from the flowers.

Pruning does not take place without pain and letting go. Pruning is a practical action taken that may not result in a pretty picture initially. The one who prunes does not worry about what is being cut off because he or she knows that in the near future the plant will be healthier, fuller and more beautiful than it was before. To leave the plant as it was would be to risk weakness and susceptibility to disease. The gardener knows that pruning will usually lead to more plentiful blossoms.

Jesus is a good gardener. He realizes that we don't particularly like change. He knows that we get comfortable in our ruts and so we don't usually diverge from our patterns easily. If Jesus didn't start clipping away we would become shaggy and unkempt and susceptible to all manner of temptation.

But mostly Jesus looks at us and sees the potential for beauty and wholeness. He can see, like the good gardener, what is possible in the future. And when we willingly allow Jesus to cut back our wild growth we will find new life springing up on branches that it seemed would never bear anything worthwhile. It is spring. Let the gardener take hold and fashion you for new life. You are guaranteed to like the transfiguration.

Questions for Reflections

- 1. Have I been pruned lately? Did I like the results at the time or do I like the results better now?*
- 2. What areas of society could use a little pruning? Why?*

*Prayer: Lord, may I be open to Your transformation even though it may be painful.
Help me to realize that change will bring greater health to my soul.*