

IF we stay connected to Jesus – like a branch to a vine --- THEN we produce fruit. Because apart from Jesus – we can do nothing. . . And the fruit we Christians produce is the fruit of the Holy Spirit:

Love, Joy, Peace

Patience, Kindness, Goodness

Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control.

And much like an apple tree doesn't produce fruit for its own benefit – it produces fruit for the benefit of those who pick the apples off the tree – a Christian does not produce these fruits of the Holy Spirit for their own benefit – but for the benefit of the Body the Christ. . . For Christianity is not just a Jesus and ME experience – but a Jesus and WE experience.

And we have heard ample evidence of such thinking through this Easter season in our readings from Scripture:

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of their possessions were their own – but they had everything in common.” [Acts 4:32]

“There was no needy person among them.” [Acts 4:34]

“They distributed goods, each according to need.” [Acts 4:35]

“The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and grew in number.” [Acts 9: 31]

“Let us love not in word of speech – but in deed and truth.” [1 John 3:18]

“And God's commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us.” [1 John 3:23]

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.” [1 John 4:7]

“This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.” [John 15:12-13]

Loving others – like staying connected to Jesus – is not always easy -- as it often doesn't come naturally . It takes time and effort – which is why some of us struggle to do it well.

I find it interesting that on a day when I am talking so much about love --- it's a day we honor those who do their best to love us like God loves us – all the time, regardless of what kind of trouble we can get ourselves into ---- we honor our mothers today.

In a little over a week, I will be flying off to the Gulf Coast for a few days of rest and renewal – otherwise known as vacation ----- and I always think of my mom when I fly. It's not because she, herself, has a love of flying – because she doesn't ---

but it's because of that little talk given by the flight attendants before take-off – most often delivered by a taped voice these days.

Most of you know the routine – in case the cabin loses pressure, the air masks will pop out --- and you are to put yours on first – before helping others put theirs on.

All of her life – those would have been very hard words for my mother to put into practice – to take care of herself first – before she took care of someone else ---- especially her husband and her kids – but also my mother was a good example of someone who took the words of Jesus to heart – “whatever you do to the least of your brothers and sisters – you do for me.”

And in this way, she was a good role model for me of Christianity being a God and WE religion – for it was never about her.

Even now, when I call home, I ask her what she has been doing. Sometimes she will reply – oh, I was at Church today helping serve the senior citizens' dinner. I'll say – Mom, your 88 --- you are a senior citizen- -- someone should be serving you!

My mom loves others in a way God wants us all to love one another. . .

*And they'll know we are Christians: by our love, by our love – yes they'll know we are Christians
by our love.*
Let's hope so.