

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sunday, October 1, 2017

Let's discuss staying connected. Connections are all over our world. Examples include; connecting to Wi-Fi, having a close connection with a girl or guy you admire, making a good connection for a business opportunity or connecting with a resource to receive help. There are connections everywhere in our world. So ask yourself, "How connected am I with my church community?" If you have trouble answering this question, you may want to first ask yourself, "What IS community?" Today's scripture readings help us identify the meaning and importance of a vibrant and active faith filled community.

The definition of community is simply: a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. As Catholics we are a part of a universal community that calls us to live a life striving after Christ's example. Our one goal in life is to get to heaven and our attitude should be a joyous one willing to do what the Father asks. Our interests include taking advantage of the sacraments that the Lord has generously given us, embracing our talents and gifts while using them to glorify the Lord and most importantly showing Christ's unconditional love to all whom we meet regardless of race, sexual orientation, political choice, or religion. Now, the community part comes in "as a result", meaning we must be striving to live this sort of lifestyle before we can form as one unit.

The scriptures today talk about the Lords vineyards, His generosity, and His mission for you and for us. Let's dive into "vineyard" which usually is a symbol for the church community. The scriptures mention how those on the vine, bear good fruit, meaning people living a life for God. Those off the vine or those who need to be taken off, bear bad fruit, meaning people not living a life for God. When scriptures refer to those bearing bad fruit, they are referring to the people who are not actively striving to live a holy life. The church is built on sinners striving to become saints. In order to obtain this sainthood, we need help. I repeat, NEED HELP. There is no possible way for us to get to heaven on our own. That is where the Lords generosity comes in. He not only offers Himself, but He also offers His people to help us and the 'people' the Lord is offering is US! We are each other's stepstools into heaven. The Lord knows we need to stay connected to Him because the temptations around us are never ending. We need people who will call on us and encourage us to choose Jesus. Even Jesus did not walk this earth alone. He had his 12 apostles and hundreds of disciples ready to fight for Him and with Him. This is the mission the Lord has for you, to truly be a part of His community –of his Body of Christ.

"Brothers and Sisters keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you." Brothers and sisters I challenge you to get to know your community. Start with little things like meeting the family that sits behind you every Sunday or thanking your priest for his response to his vocational call. Build upon these relationships. Make time to attend church functions, whether that is a youth group event or a bible study. Get involved. I can tell you first hand my faith journey has been a bit of a roller coaster. At times ranging from active

and faith-filled with retreats, prayer, and church ministry, all the way to a dry faith life filled with the bare minimum effort of mass on Sunday and meal time prayers
Throughout some of my years I fell into the path of sin and I see now that not having many friends who were actively catholic made this journey extremely difficult as a young person. In recent years I have been able to experience and live in a vibrant and faith filled community. Community is where you will find your support. It's where you will be motivated to live out your faith. And it is one of the places the Lord will be waiting for you. "Where two or more are gathered in my name, I WILL BE PRESENT", that is a commitment and a promise. With that, I challenge you to live a life of conviction because you were not made for a life of comfort or for just one hour of celebration every Sunday morning, you are made for greatness.

Bethany Szamocki