

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter • B

### Christ the King • May 10, 2009

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It has been said that the Christian faith is nothing without others. Worship is a communal, others-involved gift that we offer to God. The breaking of the bread and the pouring of wine, the hearing of Scripture, the giving and receiving of the gift of peace, the beauty of our faith captured in music are all communal experiences that we celebrate with others. The love of Christ and the invitation to worship draw us together and we become community and belong.

God knows that we all need to be a part of an authentic community, a community where we are known as we really are, and where we can share our gifts, time and resources, where we belong. This is hardwired into us by our creator. Remember, in the beginning, God created humankind in relationship, and God said: “It is not good for humankind to be alone.”

We are meant to be connected, to belong. Not one of us can make it on our own, we were not meant to. We learn best when we can exchange ideas and challenge each other. We need help to recover when we are too weak to manage on our own. We need the strength and companionship of shared joys and sorrows.

Jesus offers this very sense of community, belonging and connection to his disciples and to all of us. Using the metaphor of the vine, Jesus reminds us that he is the vine that holds the various branches together. He is the vine that streams nourishment into our lives. He is the source of our connection to God and to each other. He is the source of our strength and blessing. Without the vine, the branches wither. Without the vine, the branches lose their connection to the soil and each other. Without the vine, the branches have no life.

So what does this say to us? For one thing, it says that we are spiritually and relationally bonded to our Lord and each other. No one can say, “I believe in Christ,” and then shun someone else—or worse, ignore the common life of the Church. We worship the risen One who gave his life

that we would be God's people. And as God's people, we must share that life with others.

Belonging is so vital to each of us. In this age of technology it should be easy. And yet, despite of our cell phones, our blackberries, instant email and GPS on our PDA's, blogs and twittering, Facebook and MySpace, many people feel more alienated and alone than ever before. God knows we need to belong; we need real community.

So as we gather for worship each week, look around and see who is present and who is missing. If someone you know is absent for two or more weeks, call them up and let them know you've missed them. If you see someone you don't know, smile and take a moment and introduce yourself. Should someone misspeak or fail to be as friendly as you would hope, pray for them and find ways to reach out. I know it isn't easy, but let's try.

If we stay connected to Christ, we will be connected to God and each other in ways that we could never deserve nor understand. And we will know the joy of real community, real connection, real belonging. It is here, where ordinary people gather at this table again and again, where we come to know who we really are: the church. It is here where we learn to live with others and for others, in the love of Christ. It is here that we belong!