

Sunday Reflection

- ◆ **First Reading:** *Acts 9:26-31*
- ◆ **Second Reading:** *1 John 3:18-24*
- ◆ **Gospel:** *John 15:1-8*

..... What do you understand by the words **EVERY BRANCH THAT BEARS NO FRUIT MY HEAVENLY FATHER CUTS AWAY AND EVERY BRANCH THAT DOES BEAR FRUIT HE PRUNES TO MAKE IT BEAR EVEN MORE FRUIT** ; What is this pruning business about in the Gospel context? ; If you look up an English dictionary, to prune means to trim a tree or bush by cutting away dead or overgrown branches, or simply to remove unwanted parts ; for those of you who take care of a garden, you know what the process is about ; weeds have to be uprooted, overgrown branches have to be clipped, grass has to be cut, bits of rubbish have to be collected, fresh soil may be put down here and there etc., If your garden is left in a state of neglect, it begins to look like a dumping ground, less than pleasant to behold ; In ways our lives are not much different from taking care of a garden ; If we are to get the best out of our time on earth, then our lives will need caring and cultivation, but what does that mean in the context of to-day's Gospel reading from st.John? ; You and I are to cultivate inside ourselves a home for the lord, a garden of peace, a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit ; How are we managing the garden-of-our-soul? ; How would you compare the present state of your soul to garden maintenance? What needs to be uprooted and thrown out? Anything within that looks unattractive to God needs to be confronted, you know what I mean!! I'm referring to the shady side of the "garden within" where we have blotted out the light because of our malicious gossip, our hidden prejudices, our little hypocrisies, our petty omissions, perhaps thinking "ah sure!, no-one will notice", behold! our downfall!

“NO-ONE WILL NOTICE!!!” really!!!, as if, we can fool God, that’s impossible ; God sees all things, He knows all things, He hears all things ; This Gospel reading to-day demands that we continue to do a spiritual cleansing so that our lives may look pleasing and clean to the eyes of God, and in so doing the Holy Spirit helps us to grow to greater holiness-of-life, as we read **AND EVERY BRANCH THAT DOES BEAR FRUIT HE PRUNES TO MAKE IT BEAR EVEN MORE FRUIT ..**

In other words, every believer, every lover of the Lord who continually makes the effort to be pure will receive more and more sanctifying grace and so will be better prepared for Heaven ;

One last point! For anyone who deliberately turns their back on God with clear knowledge and full consent, there is a severe warning in this same Gospel reading **ANYONE WHO DOES NOT REMAIN IN ME IS LIKE A BRANCH THAT HAS BEEN THROWN AWAY, HE WITHERS ; THESE BRANCHES ARE COLLECTED AND THROWN ON THE FIRE ...**

these are our options, we are free to choose! either to cultivate a spiritual garden within (our soul) that produces nothing only stagnant rotting overgrowth due to deliberate neglect of Divine Friendship Or to cultivate an attractive outpour of effort in the form of perseverance in prayer, Faith and good works ; This is the good soil within that can only lead us to our home in Heaven.

Fr Kieran A. Fitzharris SVD