

CHAPTER 6

Today's passage to ponder is from the Gospel of John (15:1-4, 9-17):

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.... As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. 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. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

1. As you read today's passage, think about how you bear fruit for God, the Vine Grower. How has God pruned you so that you can be more fruitful? Looking closely at the italicized text from verse 16, how has God caused your women's ministry to bear fruit?

2. Describe some family traditions. How do these bring joy to your life?

CHAPTER 6

3. Now think of some traditions in your women's ministry. How do they increase joy in your community? How do these traditions enhance the mission? If your parish is starting a women's ministry, are there any traditions you would like to establish?
4. Does your parish or women's ministry currently assess its work and implement the feedback? If so, what have you learned, and what has surprised you about these assessments?
5. Have you ever resisted (or experienced resistance to) a change that you needed to make in life? How did you overcome the resistance?

CHAPTER 7

Today's passage to ponder is Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, found in *Luke 15:11-32*.

"A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.

"When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."

"So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began.

"Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'"

[And the father] said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'

CHAPTER 7

1. As you read this passage, think of a person with whom you have (or had) a significant conflict. Are you like the father, ever watching for the other person on the horizon? Do you see yourself as the son, needing to seek forgiveness?
2. If you have resolved this sort of deep rift, describe how you reached reconciliation. If you long to resolve this sort of rift, what is holding you back?
3. Reflecting upon your life, is there someone from whom you need to seek or grant forgiveness? How would seeking or granting forgiveness lighten your burden? How would forgiveness increase your peace and joy and that of your community?
4. Jesus told Faustina, “[S]peak of My mercy. Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy [sacramental confession]. There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated.” Think of the last time you went to Confession. Did you lay everything before Jesus? If so, how did you feel afterward? Share that feeling and what God has done for you through the sacrament. If this hasn’t happened, what is holding you back?
5. This chapter presented ways to resolve conflicts with deeds, words, and prayers of mercy. What are some ways that you can extend mercy in women’s ministry? How has a friend in ministry extended mercy to you?