

St Bridget

Today is Thursday the 23 July, the feast of St Bridget, in the 16h week of Ordinary Time.

The monks of Pluscarden Abbey sing Psalm 90: You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust." As I listen, I become aware that I, too – and all the people around me... my family, neighbours, friends – live in the shelter of the Almighty. And as I enter into prayer, I, too, place my trust in my Creator, my stronghold, my God.

Today's reading is from the Gospel of John.

John 15:1-8

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

Jesus refers to vines and vineyards frequently in his teaching. Can I take myself in my imagination to a vineyard and wander in the sunshine through its green, leafy paths? In this passage Jesus compares himself to a vine and his Father to a gardener. What does this vine look like? And how does the gardener tend the vine?

The process of producing healthy vines involves a seasonal cutting back - it's sometimes drastic! We wonder how on earth the plant can grow again. But, with careful, expert tending - grow it does, and produces even more fruit than before. Are there areas of my life where I am feeling a drastic, almost cruel, cutting back? Do I long for those green shoots to appear again?

Jesus says "Abide in me, as I also abide in you." What does "abiding" or, as another translation puts it "remaining" in Jesus look like to me? How does it feel?

As you hear the passage again, allow yourself to be immersed in this vineyard imagery.

Talk to God about where this vineyard scene has taken you.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.