

## **WE ARE ALL SPECIAL BRANCH**

In today's Gospel (John 15:1-8), Jesus compares Himself as a Vine tree, and God the Father, as the Vinedresser, who, like a gardener, prunes and shapes the branches of a plant, to make them stronger, in order to grow and survive the hard weather. The Church is also referred to as a Vineyard planted here on earth by God. It is the Words of God, through the teachings of Jesus Christ that shapes and prune our souls, through the workings of the Holy Spirit. Jesus helps us to grow spiritually and deliver us from the evil attacks of the devil. A structured faithful prayer life and obedience to God's will, helps us to blossom as true Christians. The invisible source and life of a tree is the hidden root. The root manifests itself by becoming visible above ground as a tree or a vine. The word *humility* comes from the Latin word, meaning *earth*, which includes the *root*. Like the root, God is humble and hidden, but becomes visible on earth, in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Tree of Life. He is the fruit of eternal life that hangs on the Tree of Life. The life of the tree flows through its branches, enabling them to bear fruit. In the same way, the Life of God in Heaven, flows through Jesus, to enable us to bear the fruits of Love, provided we remain united and one with Christ the Vine.

## **DON'T BE FIREWOOD FOR THE FIRE**

If we separate ourselves from the Vine, then we end up spiritually dead. Jesus says that *these (separated) branches are collected and thrown on the fire*, which refers to Hell. A branch cannot be separated from the tree and continue to live. At the same time, it is not enough to be a branch on the tree, if no fruit is produced. To qualify as Christians and be found worthy of heaven someday, we must produce the fruits of love and mercy here on earth. The Second Reading (1 John 3:18-24), emphasises that love is not fulfilled in words alone, but must become visible in good deeds. To ignore this is to produce the rotten fruit of sin. We must keep God's commandments of love and mercy, in order for us *to live in God, and for He to live in us*. Jesus says; *Whatever we ask God, we shall receive, because we keep His Commandments and live the kind of life that He wants*. In other words, if we are disobedient children to His Law, then how can we expect Him to give us everything we want, when we do not give Him everything that He wants of us? If we treat somebody badly, we cannot expect them to go out of their way and do us a favour. In the same way, if we disrespect God, by our sinful lifestyles, then we should not be surprised, if He holds back on our requests. God bless, Fr. Brendan.