**Homily – Bishop Martin Hayes, Catholic Schools Week – January 21st 2025.**

**St Patrick’s Church, Ballinamore.**

**Theme: Christ is Alive! 1st Reading: 1 Cor.12: 4-11. Gospel John 15:1-5.**

**Communion Reflection (St Teresa of Avila).**

**Homily**

We have in our Gospel the image of the Vine and the Branches. Jesus says, ***I am the Vine, and you are the Branches***. What struck me was that the branches were to be ***pruned*** – which seems tough, the cutting back of young branches!!! A vine, an apple tree, a rose bush are pruned so that they will produce grapes, apples, flowers, respectively.

We are pruned by our baptism. Why, because baptism as well as being the celebration of God’s love, is a celebration of our belonging together as sisters and brothers in Christ, in being part of a parish, of a Christian community, a school community – the ways in which we form each other. Our baptism calls us to be other-centred, and look-out for others. We find ourselves in a school that operates in accord with a Christian vision of respect for each person and of providing a safe environment to nurture each person and to bring out the best in each person. Any community that is guided by the Word of God and by Christian values, offers the opportunity for people to be guided, or ***pruned***, and to produce the fruit of good actions for others.

Therefore, our Gospel of the Vine and the Branches calls us to deepen our belonging to the process of **pruning**, the way by which the best emerges from each one of us. We are called by Jesus in our Gospel to “***make your home in me, as I make mine in you”.*** *Christus Vivit* (CV) is a document written by Pope Francis in 2019 after a Synod on Young People. In it he highlights that *Jesus was a young person* (CV23), that his young years were *a training* or a ***pruning*** for his ministry (CV27) in which he grew in relationship with God in being part of the Holy Family of Mary and Joseph, a human family and the people of Nazareth (CV30).

We all need to be connected. In fact, we are already interconnected to each other, to all of life (*Laudato Si’*), with the Creator of life, with God, who has a plan for each one of us. In our 2nd Rd. we hear that we are ***gifted***, with ***the same Spirit***, gifted with an abundance of God’s blessings in the people, the family, the neighbours around us, gifts **given to each person for a good purpose**. These gifts are given by ***the same Spirit*** to emerge in different people in different ways in each community, school or parish to which we belong. Pope Francis states that *when we receive the Spirit we are* *ever more deeply drawn into the heart of Christ* (CV130). The challenges for us are, **1/** to recognise and celebrate those gifts around and among us and there is **2/** the challenge to offer our own gifts, to be the one there, helping, encouraging each other, not knowing, what will emerge, or how our efforts, our ***pruning*** of each other, will bear fruit.

Indeed, we are called to be together. Did you ever wonder why we are in the same school, the same Year Group, the same Class with those who will be our classmates, our colleagues of our Year Group into the future? Why is it that we are born around the same time? Why do we exist in the world in the same era, at this time in Ireland?? What are we called to do? How are we called to act? In our Offertory Procession we will bring forward suggestions for how you can take actions to help others. Our participation in the Mass calls us and sustains us to act for others. We celebrate that commitment to act in the Mass inspired by Jesus himself as Pope Francis speaking to young people says that “*Christ out of love, sacrificed himself completely in order to save you*” (CV118).

We are invited to remain connected to the people around us, our families, classmates, friends, clubs, teams, the culture of this time and to the **needs** of our time. We have a display around St Patrick’s Church, here in Ballinamore of the groups/services/needy causes that are being helped by the students of our school communities throughout the Diocese of Kilmore. These worthy causes are ways in which we are being ***pruned*** or formed, of being guided by God in fulfilling our good purpose in life.

Pope Francis clarifies that “*youth does not exist: there exists only young people*” (CV71) and in alerting young people to market forces, says “*Dear young people, “you are priceless! You are not up for sale! Please, do not let yourselves be bought*” (CV122). He emphasises that “*Each young person’s heart should thus be considered ‘holy ground’”* (CV67).

In this Jubilee Year of Hope 2025, we recall how Pope Francis said that young people are not just the future, “*they are its present; even now they are helping to enrich it*” (CV64) and “*young people have so much strength: they are able to look ahead with hope*” (CV139).

In being committed to and connected to God, in being convinced that I am made in the image and likeness of God, is how I am **alive in Christ**. Together, we are the feet, the hands, the eyes and ears of Christ, the Body of Christ in the world today, in accord with the words of our Communion Reflection today inspired by St Teresa of Avilla. We are the reason that **Christ is Alive** today in our world. Again, we remember that *Jesus was a young person* (CV23). Pope Francis speaking directly to all young people says, “*I want you to know that when the Lord thinks of each of you and what he wants to give you, he sees you as his close friend*” (CV288).

Pope Francis also states, “*With a friend, we can speak and share our deepest secrets. With Jesus too, we can always have a conversation*” (CV155). Pope Francis invites us to prayer, ‘as a conversation with Jesus’. “*Prayer is both a challenge and an adventure. And what an adventure it is*” (CV155) is the invitation placed before us by Pope Francis – it the way we keep in touch with Jesus, the Vine. I conclude with the words of Jesus himself, “***I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing***.”

Quotes from ***CHRISTUS VIVIT - 2019***

12 younger” son wanted to leave his father’s home for a distant land (cf. vv. 12-13). Yet his thoughts of independence turned into dissolution and excess (cf. v. 13), and he came to experience the bitterness of loneliness and poverty (cf. vv. 14-16). Nonetheless, he found the strength to make a new start

14 the greatest among you must become like the youngest” (*Lk*22:26)

15 Young people are not meant to become discouraged; they are meant to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better. That is why I constantly urge young people not to let themselves be robbed of hope; to each of them I repeat: “Let no one despise your youth” (*1 Tim*4:12).

23 Jesus was a young person.

24  images we have of Jesus as a child are those of a tiny refugee in Egypt (cf. *Mt* 2:14-15)

26 after being lost and found in the Temple (cf. *Lk*2:41-51). There we read that “he was obedient to them” (cf. *Lk*2:51);

27 the years of his youth, was “training”, being prepared to carry out the Father’s plan.

30 growing in a relationship with the Father, in awareness of being part of a family and a people

31 he was truly one of you

41 Church needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel

64 we cannot just say that young people are the future of our world. They are its present; even now, they are helping to enrich it.

67 Each young person’s heart should thus be considered “holy ground”,

71 “youth” does not exist: there exist only young people,

76 Try to learn to weep for all those young people less fortunate than yourselves.

118 Christ, out of love, sacrificed himself completely in order to save you.

122 Dear young people, “you are priceless! You are not up for sale! Please, do not let yourselves be bought.

125 He fills your life with his unseen presence; wherever you go, he will be waiting there for you.

129  if you are willing to let him love you and save you, if you can make friends with him and start to talk to him, the living Christ, about the realities of your life, then you will have a profound experience capable of sustaining your entire Christian life

130 When you receive the Spirit, he draws you ever more deeply into the heart of Christ, so that you can grow in his love, his life and his power.

131 Ask the Holy Spirit each day to help you experience anew the great message

132 Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything”…Pedro Arrupe

139 Young people have so much strength; they are able to look ahead with hope.

142 Our best dreams are only attained through hope, patience and commitment, and not in haste.

143  Live! Give yourselves over to the best of life!

155 With a friend, we can speak and share our deepest secrets. With Jesus too, we can always have a conversation. Prayer is both a challenge and an adventure. And what an adventure it is.

156  “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (*Gal*2:20)

162 You have to discover who you are and develop your own way of being holy, whatever others may say or think.

186  in addressing young indigenous people gathered in Panama, I encouraged them to “care for your roots, because from the roots comes the strength that is going to make you grow, flourish and bear fruit”.

279 immersed in a culture of zapping. We can navigate simultaneously on two or more screens and interact at the same time with two or three virtual scenarios. Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend”.

284 “We must remember that prayerful discernment has to be born of an openness to listening – to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways.

288  I want you to know that, when the Lord thinks of each of you and what he wants to give you, he sees you as his close friend.

299 Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, …… The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us”