

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Over in Israel across the Kidron Valley from the Olde City of Jerusalem is the Garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. It was one of Jesus' favorite places on this earth. It was a beautiful garden and He and his apostles would often camp out there when they journeyed to Jerusalem for various feasts. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as you enter in the springtime of the year you will see beautiful bougainvillea in bright purple bloom. Its beauty reminding everyone who visits there that this was a garden, and that is why Jesus was so fond of going there. It was beautiful and he relaxed in its beauty. But the bougainvillea that is there now was not there then. Bougainvillea is a South American vine that somehow was exported and planted there and now grows so radiantly.

Bougainvillea is a vine. You have to look closely, beneath the beautiful blooming buds to see the heavy, and complex network of vines which yield such beauty. Vines. There were vines there then though, at the time of Jesus. That is why at that Last Supper, as he speaks with his disciples, He can use such a simple and yet profound image that we heard in the gospel for today. "I am the vine and you are the branches, abide in me and you will bear much fruit." So, here is the image that came to me. We who gather here today—and each Sunday—are the ones who are the branches on the vine and our presence here is what helps to keep us connected to Our Lord. But we in turn are connected with others, many others, many of whom do not come here. We reach out to stay connected with our God with one hand. We reach out to stay connected with family, friends, coworkers and neighbors with the other. And in some way they are able to remain in Him, and He in them, through us and our intercession, our presence, our being in relationship with them. It is not the optimum situation for anyone. But in this world it often is what we are able to do. And in and through such connectedness, beauty emerges and people are helped and many are served and forgiveness happens and lives are changed. And there, there, is the fruit that we bear—almost without realizing it. Even as we are connected to the Lord our Vine almost without realizing it. He is alive. He is here. He is real. Do we grasp this truth? That is the question of the week.