**5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER [3rdMAY, 2015]**

READINGS: Acts 9: 26 – 31/ 1 John 3: 18 – 24/ John 15: 1 – 18

THEME: REMAIN CONNECTED TO JESUS!

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

In today’s gospel reading (John 15: 1-8), Jesus uses the imagery of the vine and its branches to teach us that without him we can do nothing; however, when we are connected to him we receive many blessings and graces. Since we have no vineyards in Ghana, I would like to illustrate the message of Jesus with a more familiar imagery – namely, the relationship between our phone and the network we use.

NEW ILLUSTRATION:

Now, let us look at the details of new imagery of the phone-network relationship:

* God the Father = **Network Service Provider or Operator**
* Jesus = **One and only Network that the Father operates**
* We (Humans) = **Phones**
* Our Faith = **SIM Card**
* God’s Grace = **Phone Credit**
* Our Good works = **Electrical Charge for Phone Battery**.

God’s network is GTN (God’s Telecom Network). It’s available everywhere 24/7 throughout eternity. Indeed, there’s no place (even under the sea or on the remotest planet) that you would be told: ‘no service’, or ‘out of coverage area’.

* GETTING CONNECTED (To remain in Jesus)
* We get connected through the free SIM CARD of FAITH.
* BEING DISCONNECTED (Fruitless Branches)
* Like the fruitless branches, we are disconnected through lack of faith and sin.
* REMAINING CONNECTED (Fruitful Branches)
* Like fruitful branches, we, having being connected to the Lord by the SIM CARD of our FAITH, remain constantly on his network by the free CREDITS of his GRACE and by the battery charging of GOOD WORKS.
* We do the GOOD WORKS by obeying his commandment: ‘You will remain in my love if you keep my commandments, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love’ (John 15:10).
* MORE FREE CREDITS (Bearing More Fruits)
* Some telecom networks promote their business by giving us some extra/free credits the more we use their services. Similarly, whereas fruitless branches will be cut off and burnt, Jesus says, ‘every branch that bears fruit [my Father] prunes, that it may bear MORE FRUITS’(John 15:2).
* In real life situation, God prunes us to bear more fruits – to abound more and more in GRACES – through his WORD (John 15:3) and sacraments, repentance and prayer, as well as when we endure the crosses of our lives, among other means.

BENEFITS:

Let me now conclude by considering the fact that the benefits Jesus offers us far exceed what any service provider can give.

* + - A network service provider can give us a new phone but can’t change our ‘personality’; however, when we remain connected to Jesus, the Bible says God (the GTN Service Provider) will make us a ‘new creation’ (2 Cor. 5:17) – entirely changed!
    - A network service provider may value us as a customer, but may not be interested in making us his/her friend; but Jesus says, when we are connected to him, we become his friends (John 15: 15).
    - A network service provider may give us some free credits to show his appreciation to us, but would not go to the extent of making us share in the very joy of his booming business; Jesus, however, says: I want my joy to be in you, so that your joy may be complete (John 15 : 11).
    - A network service provider may do strict business with us and may not be interested in our personal needs; but Jesus says if we are connected to him, our prayers will be answered (John 15:7).
    - A network service provider will not share his personal fortunes with us; but the Bible says, when we are connected to Jesus, the Father ‘blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens’ (Eph. 1: 37)!
    - Finally, beloved, I pray that if sin and lack of faith have disconnected us from Jesus, we will confess our sins and so be re-connected to him today! Amen!
    - That if we are already connected to Jesus we shall enjoy the benefits of being a new creation, friends of Jesus, filled with the very joy of Jesus, every prayer of ours will be answered, and we will enjoy spiritual blessing in the heavens! Amen!