



The Pruning Process

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The common myth is that we receive a new body every seven years as cells die and are replaced. However, stomach cells are renewed every two days or so because of acids and enzymes. Skin cells are replaced every two to three weeks. Bone cells last about ten years, and our brain cells stay with us for our entire lives. In a sense, then, we might say that our bodies are pruned, part of us remaining long-term to nurture and sustain like the trunk of a tree, and part of us severed so that life may be renewed and continue on.

If so with our bodies, are not our spirits also pruned? There is a core part of who we are that wends its way throughout our lives. Yet that “who” has rough edges in need of being smoothed; barbs need to be dulled; and certain inclinations simply need to be severed. Spouses tend to prune one another, the grace of a loving marriage. Children sometimes keep parents honest. Life events may grind down our independence and self-sufficiency. Illnesses, aging, job loss, the death of loved ones—all forcing us to recognize that we are not in control of life. We are thus pruned, forced to surrender much of what we once thought we could control.

Where is God in all of this? If God is woven into the warp and woof of all life, then all the events and rhythms of life can draw us closer to God, pruning us into goodness and fruitfulness. ●

Reflect

How have you been pruned and has this pruning led to new growth, new life?



[Jesus said,] “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.

JOHN 15:1–2

Dear Padre,

Several months ago my son died in a tragic car accident. Life, work, family, and even religion seem so meaningless now. How can I find my way back?

You have suffered a great loss. When you are able, you can choose to live in a way that will respect both your son's memory and your own ongoing life. Here are a few gentle steps that might help.

- Expect to feel numb at first. This is nature's way of helping you deal with your loss. Keep following the normal patterns of your life and, eventually, meaning will return.
- Allow your friends to help. "Sorrows shared are sorrows lessened."
- If you are sad, let the tears come! Even Jesus cried at the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:32–35).
- If you are angry, look for a healthy release. Focus the energy of your anger into productive work, even if it's just doing dishes or yard work.
- Use your experience to help others. While helping others, the Lord often reveals to us the meaning of our own losses.
- Don't be afraid to seek professional help. A therapist has the expertise to help you talk about your loss and cope with your grief.
- Pray for yourself, for your son, for all whose lives he touched, for all those who are grieving.
- After you have done everything you can, leave your loss in God's hands. The Lord will do for you what you cannot do for yourself. ●



ELINA SAZONOVA / PEXELS

The Redemptorists / DearPadre.org

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
April 29 <i>St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church</i> Acts 14:5–18 Jn 14:21–26	April 30 <i>Easter Weekday</i> Acts 14:19–28 Jn 14:27–31a	May 1 <i>Easter Weekday</i> Acts 15:1–6 Jn 15:1–8	May 2 <i>St. Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church</i> Acts 15:7–21 Jn 15:9–11	May 3 <i>Sts. Philip and James, Apostles</i> 1 Cor 15:1–8 Jn 14:6–14	May 4 <i>Easter Weekday</i> Acts 16:1–10 Jn 15:18–21	May 5 <i>Sixth Sunday of Easter</i> Acts 10:25–26, 34–35, 44–48 1 Jn 4:7–10 Jn 15:9–17



RICCARDO DE LUCA / SHUTTERSTOCK

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

Jesus needs us, like the vine with the branches. Perhaps to say this may seem bold to us, and so let us ask ourselves: in what sense does Jesus need us? He needs our witness. The fruit that as branches we must bear, is the witness of our lives as Christians.

REGINA CAELI, ROME, MAY 2, 2021