**The wrong question gets the wrong answer**

We have a ‘Focus Spot’ in church, something lively and visual that relates to the theme of the service and that will be suitable for all ages. The topic was pruning and it occurred to me that it was not an idea likely to appeal to the congregation. Sure enough, when I asked whether they would like to be pruned, none volunteered. Maybe it was the way I brandished the long handled pruners with a glint in my eye!

To be honest, I didn’t like the idea either and yet in the passage in John 15, God the gardener prunes that which is flourishing to stimulate further growth. That is like my pruning the bushes in my garden at this time of year to keep them shapely or the raspberry canes to stimulate new growth on which next year’s fruit will grow. What is there not to like if I focus on the outcome and not the process?

It struck me that I had asked the wrong question. To ask ‘Do I want to be pruned?’, is to allow my ego to have centre stage. It is those fleshly desires which St Paul decries that respond. I will always want what is well within my comfort zone, regardless of the limitations that places on God’s plans for my flourishing.

I often do ask such questions. ‘What am I going to do today?’ ‘What should I put on my to do list?’ When I am having such conversations with myself, it is hard for God to get a word in edgeways! What does that say about what gives my life its core meaning and purpose?

Ignatius, in his Principle and Foundation, says that “God created human beings to praise, reverence, and serve God, and by doing this, to save their souls”. That sounds austere and this modern paraphrase of Bergan and Schwan seems more life-giving.

Lord my God, when Your Love spilled over into Creation

You thought of me -

I am from love of Love for Love.

Let my heart, O God, always

recognise, cherish,

and enjoy your goodness in all Creation.

Direct all that is me toward your praise.

Teach me reverence for every person, all things.

Energize me in your service.

Notice in this, all is a response to God’s love, a response to the One who lovingly made us and desires the very best of each of us. Reminded of that core belief, it is easier to push the ego with its limited, selfish ambitions aside and to be in touch with our true Self, that which God created us to be; and where we dwell in God and God in us.

When we are firmly rooted in God love, the ground of our being, the Spirit can , like life-giving sap, rise up, enabling our desires to be aligned with God’s. Then the question that emerges is not ‘What do I want?’, but ‘What is God calling me to?’.

To be indifferent to all but God’s desire, is the work of the lifetime, that I ‘may never seek nor choose to be other than you intend and wish.’ The focus is on primarily *being* as God’s desires, for from a right relationship in love, right actions will surely follow.

**Leading us into prayer**

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Bergan and Schwan’s Principle and Foundation of St Ignatius

**Leading us out of prayer**

Lord God

May nothing ever distract me from your Love …

Neither health nor sickness,

wealth nor poverty,

Honour nor dishonour,

long life nor short life.

May I never seek nor choose to be

other than you intend and wish.

Bergan and Schwan’s Principle and Foundation of St Ignatius cont.