

"Abide in me, and I in you"

Reading 1 : Act 9: 26 – 31

Responsorial Psalms: Psalm 21:26-28,30-32

Reading 2 : 1 John 3 : 18 – 24

Gospel Reading : John 15: 1 – 8

Scripture: *John 15:1-8*

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.

Meditation: Why does Jesus speak of himself as the *true vine*? The image of the vine was a rich one for the Jews since the land of Israel was covered with numerous vineyards. It had religious connotations to it as well. Isaiah spoke of the house of Israel as "*the vineyard of the Lord*" (Isaiah 5:7). Jeremiah said that God had planted Israel "*as his choice vine*" (Jeremiah 2:21). While the vine became a symbol of Israel as a nation, it also was used in the Scriptures as a sign of degeneration - a deformed state of spiritual growth and moral decline. Isaiah's prophecy spoke of Israel as a vineyard which "*yielded wild grapes*" (see Isaiah 5:1-7). Jeremiah said that Israel had become a "*degenerate and wild vine*" (Jeremiah 2:21).

One must be firmly rooted in the "Tree of Life" When Jesus calls himself the *true vine* he makes clear that no one can grow in spiritual fruitfulness and moral goodness unless they are rooted in God and in his life-giving word. Religious affiliation or association with spiritually minded people is not sufficient by itself - one must be firmly rooted in the "Tree of Life" (Revelation 22:1-2, Genesis 2:8-9) who is the eternal Father and his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus makes a claim which only God can make - he is the true source of life that sustains us and makes us fruitful in living the abundant life which God has for us. It is only through Jesus Christ that one can be fully grafted into the true "vineyard of the Lord".

Bearing the fruit of righteousness, peace, and joy Jesus offers true life - the abundant life which comes from God and which results in great fruitfulness. How does the vine become fruitful? The vine dresser must carefully prune the vine before it can bear good fruit. Vines characteristically have two kinds of branches - those which bear fruit and those which don't. The non-bearing branches must be carefully pruned back in order for the vine to conserve its strength for bearing good fruit. Jesus used this image to describe the kind of life he produces in those who are united with him - the fruit of "*righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 14:17). Jesus says there can be no fruit in our lives apart from him. The fruit he speaks of here is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

There is a simple truth here: We are either fruit-bearing or non-fruit-bearing. There is no in-between. But the bearing of healthy fruit requires drastic pruning. The Lord promises that we will bear much fruit if we abide in him and allow him to purify us. Do you trust in the Lord's healing and transforming power to give you the abundant life and fruit of his heavenly kingdom?

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Are my Christian words matched by my Christian deeds? Share one example.
2. How do you stay connected to Christ as the strong Vine without whom you can do nothing?
Share one example
3. Is there anything or anyone that keeps you separated from Christ and what can you do about it?

"Lord Jesus may I be one with you in all that I say and do. Draw me close that I may glorify you and bear fruit for your kingdom. Inflame my heart with your love and remove from it anything that would make me ineffective or unfruitful in loving and serving you as my All."

source: www.dailyscripture.net, author Don Schwager