

Commentary on the Gospel: Living Christ's Life

Gospel for the 5th Sunday of Easter (Cycle B), and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 15:1-8)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 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.

Commentary

Jesus is saying goodbye to his close friends. It is difficult for him to abandon his own. Surrounded by the twelve apostles, at the Last Supper, in an atmosphere of great intimacy he

opens his heart to them and shows them the depth of his love.

On other occasions, he had told them about the Kingdom of Heaven, comparing it to a vineyard that is leased to some laborers. But now Jesus says that he himself is the vine: “I am the vine, you are the branches.” The son himself, who in the parable of the vineyard was the heir, is now identified with the vine. He has entered into the vineyard, into the world, and has become the vine.

In doing so, Jesus shows them the depth of God’s Love. He himself has become the vine. He has identified himself forever with the vine, with the life source of each one of us. The promise made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, the prophets, has become a reality. With his Incarnation, God has committed himself; his love is irrevocable.

But at the same time, the image of the vine and the branches speaks to us of a requirement of his love. He addresses each of us, asking for an answer. He wants us to enter in the current of his Love, so that he can cut out, prune, purify everything that prevents that current from reaching the furthest corner of this world.

The vinedresser takes the pruning shears and trims the branches so that more sun can reach them, so they can yield clusters of juicy grapes. Christ himself wants to prune us, so that we can live his own life. He wants to introduce us into his Passion, so that we embody it in our own life.

Then, we will receive a new way of being. Christ's life also becomes ours. We can think and act as he does, see the world with his eyes. And as a result, we can love others as he does: in his heart, from his heart, with his

heart. And thus we can help bring to the world fruits of goodness, charity and peace.

This is Jesus' desire: to remove our heart of stone, and to give us a heart of flesh, vibrant with life, a heart of compassion and mercy. He asks us to put ourselves in his wounded hands, so that he can remove from our lives what gets in the way, what separates us from God.

Small mortifications are one way of telling our Lord that we want him to take away our pride, greed, anger, laziness, envy and vanity, to cut out any grudges or impurities. We want to let the Holy Spirit prune everything that is not Christ's life, to refashion our heart in the measure of Christ's.

If we allow God's action to enter our life, we will remain in his love, and we will bear true fruit. With our small mortifications and acts of

penance we tell him: “I want to live in you, through you, with you;” “I want to make the strength of your love present wherever I am.”

So it's not a question of doing great mortifications, but of doing them with love, asking our Lord to change our hearts and help us to love others.

Christ thus fills our life with love. We make his life and death our own, so that he can live in us through love. And he enables us to follow in his footsteps, to help him redeem all souls, bringing his redemptive life to wherever we are (cf. Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, Fourteenth Station).