

Fifth Sunday of Easter, April 28/29, 2018

Father Patrick's Reflections

Dear brothers and sisters, the theme that runs through the readings is that Christians should be **productive or bear a fruit** and the metaphors of the vine and the branches make it abundantly clear. Today's gospel brings us a narrative in which Jesus conveys his teaching symbolically. Jesus draws us the picture of the vine and the branches. Jesus said: I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remain in me and I in him will bear much fruit." The vine is a well-known biblical symbol of God's people (Ps. 80:9). In the gospel today, Jesus describes himself as the **true vine** and we are the branches feeding from the vine. Jesus is the center of our lives, holding us together. We are branches all around Jesus, the vine. We were grafted into the vine, Jesus, on the day we were baptized. We draw strength from Jesus whenever we pray, whenever we gather together to celebrate the Eucharist, every time we receive the sacraments, every time we read our Bible... In the gospel today, Jesus asks us to make our **home in him**. The danger is that, there are many worldly **allurements and distractions** in our world also inviting us to make our home in them, but if we do, our branch will wither and we will not bear fruit. Therefore, let us make our home in Jesus. He alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life and when we make our home in him we will bear fruit.

Jesus said, "A branch cannot bear fruit all by itself but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me" (John 15:4). It is not just a question of making our home in Jesus because it feels good. A branch, which is connected to the vine, bears fruit. Jesus asks us to bear fruit. He says in the gospel, "Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears much fruit, for cut off from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). What Jesus wants to teach us in today's gospel is the extreme necessity for us to remain in him. Now what does it mean "to remain in Christ"? "To remain in Christ," means: **to listen to him and keep his words**. Secondly, we ought to recognize **Christ alone as the real Vine** and that without him we can do nothing of value to God. Thirdly, we should do our best to **prune the structures, methods, approaches**, and others that have become old and obsolete in order to give way to new ones, which in turn will themselves grow old, and to remain always with the everlasting: Christ who himself is the vine. Again, we should live in the Church which is the Mystical Body of Christ, in accordance with the statement of one of the Church Fathers that 'who does not have the Church as his/her Mother, cannot have God as his/her Father'. In other words, we should have an active sacramental and prayer life. Do we pray always? Do we regularly go to Mass? Do we avail ourselves of the sacrament of Confession?

In our second reading John also says we are to bear fruit as he says, "Our **love** is not to be just words or mere talk, but something **real and active**; only by this we are certain that we are the children of the truth..." (1 John 3:18). Are we bearing fruit for the kingdom of God? Is our Christian love real and active, something that inspires others, or is it just words and mere talk? The way we live our lives as true Catholic may inspire someone to decide to become Catholic also. "Our **love** is not to be just words or mere talk, but something **real and active**..." (1 John 3:18) has been amplified by Barnabas in our first reading (Acts 9:26-31), Barnabas bears fruit by showing a Christian love that is not just words or mere talk but something real and active when the Church in Jerusalem doubted the genuineness of Paul's conversion and Barnabas introduced Paul to them assuring them of his conversion. (Some years later (Acts 11:25-26) Barnabas would again introduce Paul to the Church, this time in Antioch from where Paul would begin his preaching journeys. We all know what a difference Paul made to the Church. It was Barnabas who prepared the way for Paul.) So what a difference it makes to the whole Church when we bear fruit and love with a Christian love that is real and active and not just words or mere talk.

In conclusion dear friends, let us reflect on our lives and see if we always remain in Jesus Christ who is the vine. Each one of us is unique because we have been given different gifts and abilities to evangelize the world. Let us do our best to **prune the structures, methods, approaches** so that what have become old and obsolete in s may give way to new ones and **bear much fruit**. Again, let us strive to live active sacramental and prayer lives by going to Mass regularly and by availing ourselves for the sacrament of Confession so that we may bear fruits that will last for eternity. Amen!