

“The Vine and the branches”

Last week our Gospel gave us a continuation on the theme, *‘the love of God and His compassion for us’* by Jesus pointing out what it means to be a good shepherd. This week similarly, in continuing His theme of a Good Shepherd, Jesus tells us what we must do so we can be grafted to the Good Shepherd by using the simile of *‘He is the Vine and we are the branches.’*

Jesus used the simile of a vineyard as an image of Israel, an image familiar to the people of His time to drive home His teaching on our total dependency on Him for our salvation. How would Jesus have addressed His teaching if He came during our generation instead of 2000 years ago? He would probably have used technology such as our computer versus the information highway.

Jesus will be the computer and we will be the information highway which will be almost useless if it is not compiled by a computer. Information would just be hanging out scattered in the world without a computer to compile the data fast enough to make sense of them. Though we will still be able to use little of the information just as the people of old knew a little about God. The fullness of what God wants us to know, could only have been revealed by Jesus His Son.

Jesus revealed to us that if we remain in His love, we will inherit unimaginable benefit when we receive the Holy Spirit who is the bond of union between us and Jesus Christ our savior. He says by remaining in His love, we will inherit eternal life; and as branches are to a vine, we will share in His own divine nature.

How do we remain in His love? For those who respond to the call of the Vine, our union with Him will depend upon a deliberate use of our free will to respond to His call. On His part, the union will be effected by His grace. You see, if we have good will, we will make the act of faith that will bring us to Christ and by His grace, and through the Holy Spirit, we will be grafted to Christ. Then, we will receive from God the dignity of being called daughters and sons of God which makes us members of His family.

How do we know that we are members of His family? As we heard from our second reading, John says, when we obey His commandments, we will remain in Him and He will remain in us, **“Through the Spirit He gave us.”** As baptized followers of Christ, Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit has given us a share in His Spirit so we will know He is living in us and we are living in Him.

Sometimes, due to our sinful nature, we become branches cutoff from the vine or stray-sheep, straying from the flock and we will no longer live in Him. Jesus tells us that when we are cutoff from the vine, God has the power to re-graft us unto the vine again because He is the true Farmer and the chief Shepherd. Our re-grafting over and over, happens when we go through conversion and reconversion.

The Son of God became one of us by taking on our nature in order to lead us into communion with His Father. He came to bridge the gap due to sin that separated us from His Father. He came not only to live in us, but to act in us so we could be His vehicle in reaching others. As Christians, we are called to participate in the creative and loving regeneration work of God.

All life comes from Him, through Him, and then through us who are the branches, so through Him, we are to bear fruit. Just as sap runs through the vine, through the branches and the branches bear fruits so are we to bear fruits. After we bear fruits, then we become the salt of the earth and the light of the world reflecting His light so others who do not know Him, will be attracted to Him, who is the source of our light.

We become springs of living water as the woman at the well, attracting others to our source of light, just as she attracted people of her village to Jesus. God uses each of us as mediators or intercessors and instruments of His grace, that is why we are here today and every Sunday to become more fruitful branches for God's services.

As we come to receive Him in the Eucharist, let us remember the words of Christ **“By their fruits you will know them.”** The way we live our lives is the proof that shows others if we live in Him and Him in us.