

Without Me You Can Do Nothing!

Striking in the gospels of last week and today, Jesus uses some figures or analogies to describe our relationship with Him and the Father. Last week the good shepherd Sunday was the use of the shepherd and the sheep. We are the sheep that belong to him. Today, he uses the vine, calling himself the vine, we the branches, and his Father, the Vine-dresser. These figures are the common figures that the Palestine people in his time are very familiar with. In our case, we can imagine the use of these figures and adapt them within our context. All these are meant to describe to us the type of relationship he wants to exist between him and us, his disciples.

The analogy of the vine resembles that of using any tree to show the connection between the tree, its branches, and the fruits it bears. The three figures are well connected. If a branch of a tree is cut away from the tree, there is no way that branch will live to bear fruit, it will just wither away as Jesus describes- “without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). But if the branch is connected to the tree and is pruned then it bears fruit as Jesus describes “whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.” Jesus points out in the last part of the gospel that is by our bearing the fruit of discipleship that his Father is glorified.

The foundation of every discipleship is love. God is love. It is through his love he created us in his image and redeemed us by the selfless love of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ. The mystery of this love is what we are celebrating in this Easter season, which he invites us to share in the community of disciples and commands us always to go and make disciples of the nations in his name. The love in discussion as St John points out clearly in the 2nd reading has to be practical it shows itself in deeds and truth. The love has to be horizontal and vertical, God and our neighbor. To love God is to keep his commandment (Jn 14:15) and his commandment is to love our neighbor. One cannot love God without loving his or her fellow human being who carries this image. The greatest evil is the denunciation of this image of God in each of us.

God uses every opportunity to reach us because he wants us to remain in him so that he can prune us. We all need pruning in one way or the other. God is deeply committed to us, just as he was to those early believers, especially the story of Saul after his conversion. God’s grace can prune the vices of our lives and fill us up with virtues. If we try our best to stay connected with him during our days, he will prune us as well. It won’t always be enjoyable because it is all about detaching ourselves from our inordinate desires and passions that are self-centered to attach to him that is self-less. Whatever this connection will cause us, the worth surpasses the pains.

“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).