

28 April 2024 -- 5th Sunday of Easter "B"

[Acts 9:26-31; 1 John 3:18-24; John 15:1...8](#)

Homily

'I am the true vine'. This is one of the many statements in which Jesus reveals his identity: I am the living water, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the door of the sheep, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and so on. The elements with which He identifies are almost always essential elements of human life, and an adjective is often added to emphasise their importance: living water, the good shepherd, for example.

Here, Jesus presents himself as the true vine. To understand the meaning of this adjective, we must remember that truth, in Jewish thought, is closely linked to the idea of fidelity and constancy. We must not forget that throughout the Old Testament, particularly in the prophets, the people of Israel are compared to a vine (Hosea 10:1; Jer 2:21; Ezek 17:1-10; Isaiah 5:1-8 etc.). But the problem with this vine is that it has not been true, it has not been faithful, and so it has not borne fruit for its owner. Therefore, it is in contrast to this vine that Jesus declares: 'I am the true vine'.

Another important category in our text is that of permanence. The verb 'to remain' recurs constantly (eight times) like a leitmotif. We can only bear fruit if we remain closely united to Jesus; that is, if we remain in Him and He in us. And the glory of the Father of Jesus, who is the vinedresser, is that we bear much fruit. Indeed, we are not called to be disciples of Jesus and to form His Church simply for our own individual perfection, but to bear fruit in the world, to which we are sent to be witnesses of the salvation brought by Jesus.

Jesus takes the image of the vine even further. In order to bear fruit, it is not enough to remain attached to the vine. We have to be willing to be purified, to be pruned; to be stripped of everything that is foreign to the Gospel.

In the first reading we have the example of someone who allowed himself to be pruned. On the road to Damascus, Paul was stripped of everything and grafted onto the true vine that was Christ, of which he was to be one of the most fruitful branches.

As for the second reading, from the Apostle John, it invites us not to be discouraged when we have been unfaithful, when we feel like withered branches, and when our own heart accuses us. God is

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greater than our hearts and he knows everything. His merciful love can always bind us to the true vine and make us bear fruit in abundance -- fruit that will never be ours alone but rather that of the true vine of which we are only branches.

Armand Veilleux