



"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned... If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love". John 15: 5-10

April 2015: Reflection - (John 15:5-10)

As the Mediterranean lands is known for its viculture, the metaphor of the vine is highly illustrative of the common life of the Palestinian setting of the Biblical Israel. The image of vine has long been a metaphor of Israel-YHWH relationship in the Hebrew Bible (see Is 3, 14; 5, 1-7; 27, 2-8; Jer 2, 21: 12, 10; Ezek 19, 10- 14; Hos 10, 1; Ps 80). For the most part, it expresses the care and predilection of YHWH for Israel but also the fate of eventual uprooting when it fails to bear fruits. Jesus' use of the vine metaphor takes the lead from the prophets, as many instances the Gospels show (Matt 20, 1-16; 21, 33-41 [// Mk 12, 1-9; Luke 20, 9-16]. However, the parable of the vine and branches has a unique significance. Found only in the Gospel of John, it comes to us from the words Jesus spoke at the Last Supper, the evening of his death.

The metaphor leads us into deeper levels of meaning. Behind the metaphor of vine and branches lies the passionate longing of the Lord, and consequently of the disciples to remain together as one body and spirit. The vine cannot bring out the fruit without the branches; nor can the branches bear fruit without remaining in the vine. The vine and the branches share the same roots and rim. Just as they draw life from water by the one and same land and air proffered by the same firmament, the same sap gushes between them; nothing can be more beckoning for a symbiosis, mutual abiding.

Transferred into the realm of Jesus-disciple relationship, the vine-branch metaphor underlines the enduring bond that exists between Jesus and disciples. Jesus and disciples are under the nourishing care of the Father, who as a vinedresser nourishes the vine, prunes its branches and carefully watches over its growth and fruition. Jesus and the disciples form a unity and bear the fruit together. As in marriage where the love begets life so also by abiding mutually in love they bear the fruits of love.

The life-giving sap, which is the inner ligature of the relationship between Jesus and disciples, is the WORD which the Father reveals through Jesus. Jesus is the mouth of God, like the prophets; unlike the prophets who spoke God's Word to the people of God, Jesus is the WORD of God which became flesh and lived among them.

Attentive and lovingly listening to the Word, they become more and more at home with the Word. The dwelling of the Word within the disciple and the disciple dwelling within the Word create a symbiosis, a mutual indwelling. Abiding in Jesus, the eternal Word of the Father, the disciple is continuously led into a life with Jesus. They become one with the Him. Jesus abides in the disciples enabling them to bear testimony to the new life they share with Him. It is the same as sharing in the life of Father, who loves the Son and lives in the Son. Word creates a singular belonging of the disciple to the communion of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

Dwelling in Jesus creates a bond of love and communion among the disciples themselves. As branches of the one and same vine they together form the flesh of the Word. The incarnation of Word in Jesus is continued through the Church, which is the flesh of Christ.

JESUS YOUTH
Households

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