

V SUNDAY AFTER EASTER– 2nd May 2021

WHOEVER ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM, HE IT IS THAT BEARS MUCH FRUIT– Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

John 15,1-8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

This Sunday’s reading transmits and instils so much serenity. Last Sunday Jesus presented himself as the shepherd, whose gift of his own life is not in response to a danger to the flock, but even precedes it; this Sunday Jesus presents himself as the real vine. Let’s listen to chapter 15 of John’s Gospel. Jesus states, claiming the fullness of the divine condition with the divine name “*I am*”... “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me...*” naturally in the figure of the branch are represented his disciples and believers, the branch which, absorbs the lifeblood that flows in the wood of the vine “*.. that does not bear fruit ..*” that is, it takes the energy, but it does not transmit it to others because the relationship with Jesus is a relationship of received and communicated love; here is the case of one who receives this love, but then does not communicate it to others. Well, the Father, he is “*the vinedresser*” this is due to him, he sees that it bears no fruit “*..he takes away,..*” In Jesus’ words there is chapter 15 of the prophet Ezekiel, where he speaks of the wood of the vine. The wood of the vine is the only one among the fruit trees that is useless if not to carry only the bunch of grapes, something like a tool cannot be made with it, it only serves to be burned. . Therefore the branch which, assuming this sap, this energy and does not transform it into love, is useless, so the Father takes it away. “*..and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes.*” . ”, So whoever receives this love and transmits it to others. This pruning or purifying what does it mean? In the branch there may be harmful elements that the Father, who is the vinedresser sees as an impediment to transmit love and then it is he who takes care of purifying; that is, the action of the Father is the constant and continuous elimination of those behaviours, of those harmful attitudes in the individual that can prevent a greater production of love. But this belongs only to the Father; it is not the individual who has to search for his own defects and eliminate them because it can cause irreversible damage. So it is the Father who purifies the vine, why? In order for it to bear more fruit, he takes away what prevents it from generating fruit and frees it.

With this message Jesus infuses so much serenity and takes away from the disciples and the believers the ambition of spiritual perfection; spiritual perfection is as distant and abstract as is

one's ambition is greatness of one's self. Jesus invites us to the total gift of self that can be immediate, concrete and it is this gift that frees new energies of love. Amongst these words we seem to hear the first Letter of John where the author says “*for whenever our heart condemns us,*” the heart is the conscience “*.. God is greater than our heart,..*” (v.20) Do not worry, orient your life for the good of others, if there are attitudes in you that the Father, not you nor others from the community, see as harmful, leave it to him, you only have to think about liberating new energies of love.

And Jesus continues “*Already you are clean..*” so we turn to the fact of purification “*.. because of the word that I have spoken to you.*” The word, the message of Jesus, the message that is condensed into a single one commandment, that of mutual love as he loves us, this is already the initial basis of purity

Then Jesus’ invitation “*Abide in me, and I in you.*” Then he states “*As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.*” So the branches must be fully attached to this wood of the vine to absorb this lifeblood and pass it on to others. And again Jesus claims to be the vine and the branches “*Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, ..*” It is a growing fruit because the greater the capacity to love, the greater is the ability of the Lord to give this love, “*.. for apart from me you can do nothing.*”

Jesus states “*If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*” Ezekiel had said that the wood of the vine is useless, not even the ash is useful. In the past, when women washed sheets with ash, the ash of the vine was useless because it stained them, this is the message, bear fruit, or you are of no use at all.

And then the final assurance, but with two conditions “*If you abide in me, ..*” if you absorb this love and transmit it to others “*... and my words..*” this message of love “*..abide in you,..*” so at this point “*....ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*” The acceptance of Jesus and his message is a guarantee of full communion with the Father and of the fulfilment of the request for prayer.

Jesus then concludes “*By this my Father is glorified,..*” Jesus takes away the image of the glory of God as something grand, extraordinary and luxurious, “*..that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*” So strangely Jesus says that bearing fruit is the only guarantee of being disciples; One is not a disciple to bear fruit, but bearing fruit is the only guarantee of being a disciple of Jesus.