

**Our readings today point to Christ as a necessity of life**

**We do not follow him as we might follow a political leader**

**Washington or Lincoln or whoever your favorite is**

**We do not follow him as those that follow Mohammed or Buddah**

**We might admire these people**

**Respect them**

**But we are not tied to any of them like we are to Christ**

**None of them ever made the claims Christ does**

**He is the Word made flesh**

**Anything or any person, if they exist at all**

**They exist through Christ**

**No one in all of history has said the things Christ has said**

***Remain in me***

***As I am in my Father***

**He is the vine**

**We are the branches**

**If we are severed from the vine**

**We die**

**This is a radical way of life**

**And it is a strange way of life**

**This Gospel tells us we have a very special relationship with God**

**The vine and the branches is relationship of life**

**Let's look at some of the principals of this life**

**First, it is a life that has a purpose**

***I am the vine,***

***And my Father is the vine grower***

**Every branch has a purpose**

**It is to grow grapes or tomatoes or whatever it is meant to grow**

**We are called to produce fruit in our lives as well**

**Fruits of the Spirit**

**Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness**

**Generosity, forgiveness, mercy, chastity, zeal for the kingdom**

**These and so many more**

**Are we fulfilling what we are called to be?**

**We all have our gifts and talents**

**We all have our place**

**Like the NFL this weekend**

**The draft is going on**

**Players are evaluated and selected**

**But they will have to perform**

**Second, branches are pruned as they grow**

**To give vigor to the rest of the plant**

**The branches are trimmed so you don't have a wild plant growing  
willy nilly**

**They need to be cared for**

**The pruning is done so the plant can fulfill its purpose**

**Like the football team**

**The players, coaches, front office, ball boys**

**They all have their role**

**They cannot do what they might want to do**

**They are part of a team**

**The church has its team in a way as well**

**We have the pope and bishops**

**Priests and religious**

**Laity married and single**

**All have their role,**

**We all have rights and responsibilities**

**For the good of the Church, we fulfill our duties**

**And we respect those of the others**

**And then there is the pruning**

**Players get cut for many reasons**

**Some don't perform**

**Some are a poison to their teammates**

**Sometimes there is simply a better person at our position**

**None of us enjoy this particular aspect**

**But it is needed for a successful team**

**And it is needed for a healthy spiritual life**

**It is needed for a healthy Church**

**Third, we are called to persevere**

*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*

**Remain; seven times in this passage**

**Remain in me**

**How do we do this?**

**First, through the Word**

**Take out your Bible and read it**

**A little at a time**

**A couple passages a day**

**John tells us:**

*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you,*

*Ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.*

**Remain in his Word**

**Next, through prayer**

**We take the Word and we pray over it**

**We have to make it a part of our daily schedule**

**If we leave prayer to the last**

**Fit it in when there is time**

**We will never fit it in**

**Our lives fill up with so much**

**So fast**

**Make prayer a priority, and remain in Christ**

**Then in the sacraments**

**Especially Holy Communion and the sacrament of reconciliation**

**Feeding our souls with his real presence**

***He who eats my body and drinks my blood***

***Remains in me and I in him***

**In the sacraments, remain in me**

**Living the commandments**

**Being Catholic Christians means there are rights**

**But there are also responsibilities**

**God did not give Moses 10 suggestions**

**10 ideas on how not to offend him**

**He gave us the 10 commandments**

**And we are called to live them**

**To go back to our analogy**

**The Word is the Christian playbook**

**We study it**

**We know it inside out**

**It is with us always**

**And the commandments are the plays**

**How we live the Word in our daily lives**

**Persevere, and remain in me**

**If we abide in him**

**He will protect us**

*Anyone who does not remain in me*

*Will be thrown out like a branch and wither;*

*People will gather them and throw them into a fire*

*And they will be burned.*

**If we don't know to whom we belong**

**We can be fooled to belong to anyone**

**If we lose our identity**

**We become materialistic**

**Worldly values become our highest values**

**And we will be on our own**

**But if we stay connected**

**We are protected**

**Like the vine nourishing the branches**

**Sending water and nutrients from the roots**

**Keeping the branches healthy**

**If we remain in him**

**He will protect us**

**And with all this**

**We are called to produce**

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you,*

*Ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.*

*By this is my Father glorified,*

*That you bear much fruit and become my disciples*

**If we make Christian living a priority**

**We will bear fruit**

**One last look at our analogy**

**We are all being watched**

**We are all being evaluated**

**We are all eligible for the ultimate draft**

**God's draft**

**To become his starting line up in the world**

**To become saints**

**To become his witnesses and disciples**

**To our families, our classmates**

**To our workplaces and to our governments**

**To be successful takes time and commitment**

**In sports, in business**

**In our spiritual life**

**Are we willing to put in the effort?**

**If we do, we will be successful**

**Maybe not in the world's eyes**

**But in God's eyes**

**If we remain in him**

**And allow him to remain in us**