

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