

2. March 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“Nothing surpasses love”

Jn 15:1-18

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which 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. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as 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 will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant[b] does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another. “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

Who is not familiar with the Lord's precious comparison of the true vine? Throughout the centuries it has accompanied Christians on their journey of faith. This parable graphically expresses the relationship between Jesus and the heavenly Father. As His disciples and branches of the vine, which is Himself, we need to be purified in order to bear more fruit. But the branches that do not bear fruit will be cut off. That is why it is so important that we allow our Father to purify us so that we do not have to fear being

cast out. In the processes of purification, it is good to always remember that our Father's intention is to make us bear more fruit so that the Kingdom of God will expand through our life and fruitfulness.

The word of the Lord was preached to the disciples and, having received it, they were purified. But they must remain in it, that is, in the most intimate union with Jesus. Only in Him will it be possible, in the long run, to bear the fruit that God intends for our lives. We must be very careful to bring every little deviation before the Lord so that it does not spread and wither the branch.

Jesus again promises His disciples that whatever they ask in His name will be granted, as long as they remain in Him and in His Word. This is the condition for their prayers to be heard. The fruit they produce will give glory to the Father, for the disciples will testify that it comes from Him and attribute all merits to Him, just as their Lord and Master did. They will live in the love that the Heavenly Father has for His Son. They will be enveloped in that love forever, and if they are faithful to the Lord until death, that love will reach its fullness in eternity.

Already here on earth it will be a source of true joy for them.

In following the Lord, His disciples became His intimate friends. He involves them more and more in His plan of salvation, and they are no longer mere executors of orders. They become conscious collaborators with God and sharers in His plans. At the same time, they are called to walk the same path as the Lord and to give their lives as He did. This is undoubtedly a high price that can only be understood from the perspective of love. It is a true service that comes from friendship with God and humanity. There is nothing greater than love, not even the life that God in His goodness has given us. It is subordinated to a greater love and to self-giving for the sake of the kingdom of God.

This is what we Christians have had to learn and put into practice over the centuries. It is also what characterises the spiritual life in particular. It is not necessarily about suffering bloody martyrdom, but about constantly dying to ourselves, to our self-love, for the sake of a greater love. In Christian mystical theology this is called 'dying to the old man', dying to a merely natural life.

The Lord makes another point to His disciples: the world may hate them, even though they do no harm to anyone. This is because Jesus and the truth are often rejected, as we have seen again and again in the persecution the Lord suffered at the hands of the hostile Jews in the preceding chapters of John's Gospel.