

**CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES**  
*Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation*

May 10, 2009

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter (Cycle B)



**Gospel reading     John 15:1-8**

Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. 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. 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 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."

**Brief commentary:**

This is the first half of the longest monologue in John's Gospel on the union of Jesus with his disciples. Jesus identifies himself as the True Vine by using the "I am" statement so common in John. In using the divine name "I am", Jesus reveals his true identity as the one through whom salvation comes, the one equal to the Father.

John uses the Old Testament allegory of Israel as Yahweh's vine (e.g. Psalm 80:9-20). The growers of a vineyard took care of the healthy growth of the vines. When branches did not yield fruit, they were cut off and dried on the wall of the vineyard to be used later as fuel. Today's allegory has an intimate tone. Jesus is preparing his friends for the mission and reminds them that without him they can do nothing. It will be useless to depend on things outside of him. He is the true vine of which the Father takes personal care. The fruitful branches are and will be the disciples who accept Jesus' life-giving word and remain in him. We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes, and from a Christian we look for a Christ-like behavior. We must do good; this is bearing fruit. The unfruitful are taken away. And even fruitful branches need pruning.

*Today's reading offers three significant messages:*

- When the disciples remain in Jesus through love, they produce fruit.
- The disciple, who does not remain in Jesus, is no disciple at all, and good for nothing but fuel.
- The fruit lies not in great speeches but in truth and action.

**For our shared or personal reflection:**

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

1. How do I stay connected to Christ as the strong Vine without whom I can do nothing? Share one example.
2. Is there anything or anyone that keeps me separated from Christ? What can I do about it?

*Suggested readings:* Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 308; 517-518; 755; 787; 859; 1694; 1988; 2074; 2615; 2732.