

March 18th: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop and doctor of the Church

Gospel text (Jn 15,1-8): Jesus said: «I am the true vine and my Father is the vine-grower. If any of my branches doesn't bear fruit, he breaks it off; and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, that it may bear even more fruit. You are already made clean by the word I have spoken to you; live in me as I live in you. The branch cannot bear fruit by itself but has to remain part of the vine; so neither can you if you don't remain in me. I am the vine and you are the branches. As long as you remain in me and I in you, you bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not remain in me is thrown away as they do with branches and they wither. Then they are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words in you, you may ask whatever you want and it will be given to you. My Father is glorified when you bear much fruit: it is then that you become my disciples».

«I am the vine and you are the branches»

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Today we celebrate the memory of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop and doctor of the Church. He lived in the 4th century, a time of many strong theological disquisitions, heresies and apologetic discussions. It does not surprise us that five Councils, some of which were attended by St. Cyril, were held in that century. The teachings of his twenty-five catechesis are largely based on two major themes which are intertwined: the Church and the Eucharist.

This is why, the parable of the vine and the branches we read today, fits the

doctrine lived and preached by St. Cyril like a glove, since, in actual fact, this Gospel can be read mostly on an Eucharistic and ecclesial basis.

As far as it refers to the Eucharist, Jesus' allusion is clear: the fruit of the vine and the work of men, the grapes that we offer in the Eucharist, remind us of the Last Supper, when Jesus transformed his blood into wine. In fact, this Gospel is full of Eucharistic references. «When between Jesus and us there is a communion of life as between the vine and the branches, the Eucharist configure us in a unique and profound way with Jesus Christ, by renewing our hearts and our existence (...)\», said Pope Francis.

Insofar as the Church is referred, the vine and the vineyard are the People of God, the Church of Jesus that shares life with Him: "I am the vine; you are the branches". The Church, the whole of the vine shoots, is what bears fruit in Jesus: "If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

The commemoration of St. Cyril encourages us, therefore, to revive the communion of life with Jesus in us, where, at the same time, the Church and the Eucharist take us.