Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Gospel text (*Jn* 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 everyone 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.”

"Remain in me, as I remain in you"

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Today, once more, we may see Jesus surrounded by the Apostles in an atmosphere of special intimacy. He is giving them what we could consider as His final recommendations: what is normally said in the last moment, in the last farewell; that which has a special force, as if it would be the last will and testament.

We imagine them in the cenacle. Jesus has washed their feet there, has announced to them again that He must go, has given to them His command of fraternal love, and has consoled them with the gift of the Eucharist and the promise of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 14). And, within this 15th chapter of John's Gospel, we now find the exhortation for unity within charity.

Our Lord does not hide from His disciples all the dangers and difficulties they will have to face in the near future: “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” (Jn 15:20). But they should not be intimidated nor overwhelmed by all the hate they will find in this world: Jesus renews His promise of the arrival of the Protector, while assuring them they may ask and they will be given. Finally, the Lord prays for them —for all of us— to the Holy Father during His priestly prayer (cf. Jn 17).

But our danger does not come from outside, though: the worst menace may arise within ourselves when we fail to respect the fraternal love among the members of Christ's Mystic Body or the unity with the

Head of that Body. The recommendation is clear: “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.” (Jn 15:5).

The first generations of Christians managed to keep a very clear conscience regarding the importance of remaining united through charity. Here is the testimony of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, one of the Fathers of the Church: «Therefore run together as into one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father, and is with and has gone to one». And here is also an indication from the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Christians: “Do whatever he tells you.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)

- “We are the branches. Branches are not self-sufficient, but depend totally on the vine, which is the source of their existence” (Francis)

- “From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings. Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: ‘Abide in me, and I in you.... I am the vine, you are the branches’ (Jn 15:4-5) and he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 787)