March 18th: Memorial of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop and doctor of the Church

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.”

“I am the vine, you are the branches”

Fr. Josep Mª MASSANA i Mola OFM
(Barcelona, Spain)

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 configures us in a unique and profound way with Jesus Christ, by renewing our hearts and our existence …” said Pope Francis.

Insofar as referring to the Church, 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: "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without 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.