



PARISH OF ST. AGATHA 1

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POPE FRANCIS: THE FRUITS OF LOVE

It is our task as Christians to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel (John 15:1-8), and to bear the good fruit of love in the world. Pope Francis said "The fruit that, like the branches, we must give, bears witness to our Christian life. After Jesus ascended to the Father, it is the task of the disciples – it is our task – to continue to proclaim the Gospel in words and in deeds," he added. "And they and us, disciples of Jesus, do so by bearing witness to His love: the fruit to be borne is love." The Pope explained the importance of being attached to Christ, the vine, so that "we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and in this way we can do good to our neighbour and do good to society, to the Church."

RECOGNISE THE TREE BY ITS FRUIT

"We recognise the tree by its fruits," he stated. "A truly Christian life bears witness to Christ." Jesus tells His disciples "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." "The Lord presents Himself as the true vine, and speaks of us as the branches that cannot live without being united to Him," the Pope said, noting that Jesus used the verb "to abide," also sometimes translated as "to remain," seven times in the Gospel reading. Francis said to abide or remain in Jesus is not a passive activity, "letting oneself be lulled by life," but an active and reciprocal action: "We abide in Jesus and Jesus abides in us." "How can we do this?" he said. "Jesus says to us: 'If you abide in me, and My Words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.'" "The fruitfulness of our life depends on prayer," he stated, explaining that in prayer we can ask Jesus for the gift of seeing the world with His eyes, to "love our brothers and sisters, starting from the poorest and those who suffer the most, as He did, and to love them with His sacred heart and to bring to the world fruits of goodness, fruits of charity, and fruits of peace."

WE NEED THE LORD

Before we can follow God's commandments, before we can live the beatitudes, and perform works of mercy, "it is necessary to be joined to Him, to abide in Him." "We cannot be good Christians if we do not abide in Jesus. We need the Lord. And yet with Him, we can do everything. "With him we can do everything." "Let us entrust ourselves to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, "She remained fully united to Jesus and bore much fruit. May she help us abide in Christ, in His love, in His Word, to bear witness in the world to the Risen Lord." (Hannan Brockhaus/Vatican News).

POPE OPENS MARATHON OF PRAYER WITH ROSARY

Pope Francis led the faithful in the recitation of the Holy Rosary on Saturday to inaugurate a "Marathon of Prayer" for an end to the Covid-19 pandemic. St. Agatha's prays 4 Rosaries after every Mass (7 Days a week). Please join us to end this plaque.

SPECIAL BRANCH

In today's Gospel (John 15:1-8), Jesus compares Himself to a Vine tree and God the Father as the Vinedresser. A vinedresser is a gardener who prunes and shapes the branches of a plant to make it stronger and survive the hard weather. The Church is also referred to a Vineyard planted here on earth by God. It is the Words and Teachings of God, through Jesus, that prunes and shapes our souls to survive the attacks from the devil, giving us strength to blossom as true Christians. The spiritual fertiliser is Faith. The invisible source and life of a tree comes from the hidden roots beneath the earth. They become visible in the wood of the tree above ground. The word *humility* comes from the Latin word meaning *earth* which includes the *root*. Like the humble root, God is full of humility and invisible but becomes visible on the earth, in the Person of Jesus, **the Tree of Life**, who is meek and humble of heart. The life of the tree flows through its branches enabling them to bear fruit. In the same way does the Life of God in Heaven, flow through Jesus, to bring the fruits of Love to the world.

DON'T BECOME FIREWOOD FOR THE FIRE

If we are separated from the Vine, we end up spiritually dead. Jesus says that *these branches are collected and thrown on the fire*. Jesus is referring to the fires of Hell here. If we remain attached to the Vine then we are spiritually alive and fit for Heaven. A branch cannot be separated from the parent tree and continue to live. At the same time, it is not enough to be a branch on the tree if no fruit is produced. We must not allow our hearts to be separated from the Heart of Jesus. It is not enough to be a Christian and participate in Mass, if we do not produce the fruits of love and mercy. The Second Reading (1 John 3:18-24), emphasises that love is not fulfilled in words alone, but must become visible in good deeds. To ignore this is to produce the rotten fruit of sin.

LOVE IN DEEDS

Paul became a disciple of Jesus and ceased been a persecutor of Him, because he repented for his sins. When we sin and persist in living by our own standards, we persecute Christ and His Church. St Paul proved his love of Jesus throughout his life, by his total service to the community, even in challenging times. He bore witness to his faith and boldly spoke out defending Jesus and the Church. His life was threatened and ridiculed but divine courage and faith kept him going. St Paul was instrumental in so many other people's conversion that the apostles respected him greatly. Truly, his was a fruitful life.

BE PLANTED FIRMLY IN HIS LOVE

Did you ever pray for an intention and it did not come to fruition? Jesus teaches why this happens and gives us a clear answer today when He says; *Whatever we ask God, we shall receive, because we keep His Commandments and live the kind of life that He wants*. In other words, if we do not keep God's Commandments and do not live the kind of life that pleases Him, then how can we expect Him to give us everything we want, when we do not give Him everything He wants of us? If we treat somebody badly, we cannot expect them to go out of their way and do us a favour. In the same way, if we insult and disrespect God, by our sinful lifestyle, then we should not be surprised if He holds back on our requests. The Nine Day Novena exists because we are asked to enter into Confession, before the Novena begins, to ask for forgiveness and promise God we will change our sinful ways. God then listens with an open compassionate Heart and the impossible can become possible, thanks to God. We ask God today to help us remain in His Son as branches on the Vine, planted firmly in His Love. Like Mary who gave birth to the fruit of Life, let us give birth to that fruit of Love in our hearts. A continued Easter Blessing. Fr. Brendan.