

The Paraclete and the Vine

John 14-16

What We Found

On his last free night, Jesus furnished his friends for the time after. Let not your hearts be troubled, he said, handing them the very verb he had carried himself. Thomas admitted they did not know the way and received the sixth great I AM: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. Then the four promises of the Paraclete, the Advocate, another of the same kind as Jesus himself: he will be in you; he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that Jesus said, the promise in which the Church hears the guarantee of the apostolic memory behind the Gospels; who proceeds from the Father, words our Creed takes up (the Latin Creed adding: and the Son); and he will guide you into all truth and glorify me. Both truths stand: the Spirit is given to every believer, and the guarded memory and guidance were covenanted to the apostles in that room, whose remembrance is our Gospels and whose successors keep the deposit for everyone. Where the Church is, said Irenaeus, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church.

Our oldest architectural thread made its final move: the dwelling of God, traced from tent to ladder to the temple of his body, now widens into everyone who loves him and keeps his word: we will come to him and make our home with him. Then the seventh and final predicate: I am the true vine. Israel was the vine brought out of Egypt that yielded wild grapes; Jesus is the faithful Israel in person, and we are grafted in, or we are firewood; branches genuinely his can be cast forth if they do not abide, which is why the refrain sounds ten times: abide in me, for apart from me you can do nothing. The deepest abiding was named at Capernaum: he who eats my flesh abides in me. The vine has an altar. And the discourse ended with the sentence the Church has carried through every persecution: in the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, perfect tense, the night before Golgotha.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies 3.24

Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace. The Spirit and the apostolic community are not rivals to be chosen between; they are one gift with one address. Those who separate from the Church separate from the Spirit's fountain, and dig cracked cisterns of their own.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of John, on chapter 15

As the branch shares the very nature and life of the vine, so we come to share Christ's own life, and not merely by affection: through the Eucharist we are united to his very flesh, so that his life circulates in us as sap circulates in branches. Abide in me is not a mood; it is a communion, and the Church keeps it at an altar.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue

Catherine saw I am the way as the Bridge: the Son stretched from heaven to earth across the flood no one can ford, his wounded feet, open side, and mouth of peace as its stairs. There is no crossing except by the Bridge, and whoever tries to swim it drowns. No one comes to the Father but by me is not narrowness; it is the only architecture that spans the gap, built at the builder's expense.

Live It This Week

- **Vine time.** Ten minutes a day of pure abiding: no requests, no list, just remain. Sit with him the way a branch sits on a vine, silent and connected. Asking can come after; this week, practice staying.
- **Pray to the Person you neglect.** Once a day: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Then name one situation and hand him the case; he is your Advocate.
- **Hear your chapter at Mass.** This Sunday, listen for the priest praying: Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, peace I leave you, my peace I give you. That is the Missal's prayer built on John 14:27, prayed over you. Receive the bequest consciously for once.

Memory Verse

John 15:5 (RSV2CE)

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Before Next Session

IMPORTANT: BRING YOUR SEALED GUESS

Read John 17, 18, and 19: the great prayer and the Passion. Session 13: Behold Your Mother. And do not forget: BRING YOUR SEALED GUESS SHEET FROM WEEK ONE. Unopened. Its Passover has come, and we will open them together.

Catechism References

CCC 76-79, 245-246, 1108, 1391, 2074.