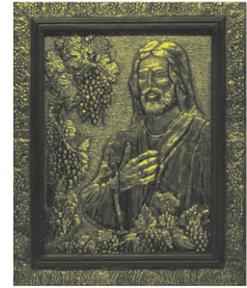


United in Christ like a Vine



*G. Gonzalez' Metal Work:
Jesus the True Vine*

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Acts 9:26-31)

Paul

^{26o}When he arrived in Jerusalem* he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles, and he reported to them how on the way he had seen the Lord and that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus **he had spoken out** boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem, and **spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord**. ²⁹He also **spoke and debated** with the Hellenists,* but they tried to kill him. ^{30p}And when the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him on his way to Tarsus.

The church

^{31*}The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

THE FOCUS: Paul speaking boldly

COMMENTARY

- The Reading is divided into two parts: about St. Paul (vv.26-30) and the Church (v.31).
- 1) Paul
 - Paul, being a convert, now a believer in Christ, feels he belongs to the community (v.26).
 - The community, human as it is, is afraid of Paul, because he was his former persecutor. They were not updated of his conversion (v.26).
 - It takes Barnabas to assure them that he is one of them now: the Lord spoke to him and he boldly spoke about Jesus (v.27).
 - Now Paul goes with the disciples in their preaching ministry.

- He again speaks boldly about Jesus (v.28).
- He even debates with the Hellenists [Greek speaking Jews] (v. 29).
- Result of his boldness: they try to kill him.

2) The Church

The church is present in all of Palestine. It is founded and walks in the fear of the Lord [Risen Lord] (v.31). It is growing in numbers through the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTIONS

When Jesus takes hold of you, your life will be changed. The one you wanted to destroy will be the one you would like to build (church and faith in Jesus).

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 22, 26-28, 30-31)

**I WILL PRAISE YOU, LORD, IN THE
ASSEMBLY OF YOUR PEOPLE. Or ALLELUIA.**

SECOND READING (1 Jn 3:18-24)

^{18m}Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (*Love must be concretely shown.*)

^{19*}[Now] this is how we shall know that we* belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him ²⁰ⁱin whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

²¹Beloved, if [our] hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God ²²ⁿand receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

^{23a}And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us.

^{24p}Those who keep his commandments **remain in him, and he in them**, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us.

THE FOCUS: Remaining in Him

COMMENTARY

- Love must be shown concretely (existentially) (v.18).
- How do we know we belong to the truth (to God)?
- Confidence in God (v.21).
- We receive what we ask (v.21).
- What are our efforts to show we love in concrete? We keep his commandments. Believing in the name of Jesus. Loving one another (v.23). We do what pleases him (v.22).
- Signs of those who keep the commandments:
 - We remain in Jesus. Jesus remains in us (v.24).

REFLECTIONS

The Reading calls for continuity and consistency in the practice of faith and love.

GOSPEL READING (Jn 15:1-8)

The Importance of Pruning

^{1*} ^a “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. ²He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes^b so that it bears more fruit. ^{3b}You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.

Importance of Connection

⁴**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**. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever **remains in me** and I in him will bear much fruit,

What happens if you are Disconnected?

because without me you can do nothing. ^{6*} ^c 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.

What happens if you are connected (see also vv.4-5)?

^{7d}If you **remain in me** and **my words remain in you**, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. ^{8e}By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

THE FOCUS: Remaining in Jesus to be fruitful

COMMENTARY

- Metaphors used: Jesus = true vine; Father = vine grower; We = branches.
- The gospel states the purpose of pruning and connection with the vine: to bear more fruit.
- To bear fruit means to be productive, to give life to others, to give delight, to satisfy others.
- Not to bear any fruit invites the Father to “take you away,” to throw you to fire.
- Extra benefit of being connected: ask what you want and it will be given... (*efficacious prayer*).
- To remain means to stay put, to keep connected, to cling to, to keep alive. Negatively, not to abandon, not to renounce faith in Jesus.

REFLECTIONS

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

St. Paul, nurtured by his faith in Jesus, speaks boldly in his name. He is bearing fruit abundantly (First Reading).

St. John advises the Christian believers to love in deeds (to keep the commandments of love) and to be interconnected with Jesus and fellow Christians (Second Reading).

The Gospel enjoins Christians to remain (*may bonding, ka-relate natin [connectedness]*) in Jesus to bear much fruit (Gospel Reading).