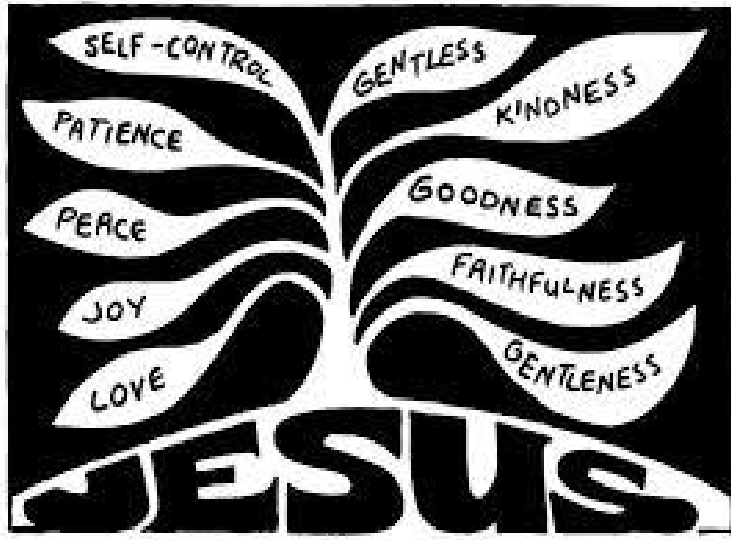


Dear Brothers and Sisters



“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.”

I remember hearing these words at a Protestant service when I was in college. I had been invited by a group of friends who were very active in their faith, from different Protestant denominations, Church of England, Evangelical Charismatic, Lutheran, Pentecostal... I was their project, they knew I was Catholic, and were eager for me to join their Christian Union – a college based Christian church. It was at one of their Sunday meetings that the Gospel of the Vine and the branches was proclaimed.

An Anglican priest then gave a sermon, but I was deaf to his words. I could only hear were the words of the Gospel that had just been read: “I am the Vine...Remain in me...”

I was not remaining in Him. The questions my fellow students had been asking me were ringing in my head:

Why do Catholics believe in the Virgin Mary?

Why do you believe in the Pope?

Do you really believe that the host is the actual Body of Christ?

Asked these questions, I felt inadequate to articulate why Catholics, let alone why I, believed these things. Here were a group of young people alive in their faith, with a vibrant community such as I had never experienced, and they did not believe any of these things. Could it be that they were right? Was the Catholic Church wrong? Could it be that my parents raised me in the faith of the Church, to believe certain things, but that in the end it does not matter what you believe?

God was speaking to my heart.

I admired my Protestant friends for their vibrant faith community, but I knew that for me to “Remain in him” meant for me to remain Catholic, even if I did not understand everything, even if I was unable to give a reason for my belief.

We will hear the Gospel of the Vine and the branches in Mass today.

May it speak to our hearts, and allow God to bear fruit in our lives.

*Happy Easter,
Fr. Sean*