

Introduction: Do you ever think of yourself as part of Christ? ... that Christ has made you one with him? ... that you are Christ to the people around you? ... that they are Christ to you? Seems fanciful ... far beyond our capacity. Yet this is what Christ is telling us today.

1) "I am the vine, you are the branches"

1. Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches." So, - we are part of Christ.

Wherever a branch of this vine is, - there is Christ.

2. The stupendous dignity that Christ gives to us! St. Augustine: "Let us rejoice and give thanks that we have become not only Christians but Christ. My brothers and sisters, do you understand the gift of God? Stand in admiration, rejoice: we have become Christ!"

2) "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit"

1. Christ speaks repeatedly of the fruit that he wants his members to bear, fruit that will glorify his Father, that will reflect the goodness and love of the Father.

2. What is this fruit?

It is the love that will flourish in them and extend through them to all the members of the Church, and to all whom they encounter.

It is the love that will unite them with all the members of the Church and reach out to all groups.

It is the love that will express the love of Christ for all people.

It is the love that will reach out to the poor and needy, the sick and oppressed, and seek justice for them.

It is the love that will witness before the world to the love of the Father, who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son.

3) How can we possibly have such a love, express such a love?

1. By "abiding in Christ", living in Christ, having Christ live in us.

2. It will not be we as such who have such a love. It will be Christ living and acting in us and working through us.

3. It will be Christ giving us his Spirit who is the energy that transforms our hearts, the hearts of the community of the Church.

4) Where do you as lay people need to show this love, exercise this love?

1. It is in the whole area of your daily lives, in your families, in your parish, at your work place.

2. It is especially in economic and political life and in the sphere of culture that Christ wants you to bring his love.

3. Our society, our culture, is permeated with materialism, secularism, individualism which affects all of us.

4. People seek fulfillment in having more and more possessions, more and more experiences to satisfy the senses. They think they can make a good political and economic system apart from God. They think they can go their own way without feeling the need of others. Catholic Social Doctrine points out the true way for life and society.

5) Your mission and responsibility

1. You, the lay members of the Church, have a mission and responsibility that only you can fulfill, that of bringing Christ to all the areas of your daily life.
2. You are called by Jesus to work in our society to promote the common good, to build up the conditions that best contribute to the wellbeing of each and every citizen. A society where the common good is being fulfilled will be a society where the weakest and neediest members are supported and have their needs responded to.
3. Our present society is not doing nearly enough for the poor and marginalized. There are a number of social justice organizations working to bring about changes in the systems and structures that keep the poor in poverty, such as inadequate welfare rates, an inadequate minimum wage, a lack of affordable housing.
The present Ontario welfare payments amount to about two-thirds of what is needed to just reach the poverty level.
We hope and pray that the Ontario Government's poverty reduction program will greatly reduce this gap.
The assistance of the Federal Government is also needed to achieve this.
(see if you can insert here an example of some local poor families, conditions local families are experiencing. Check with the food bank or St.Vincent de Paul Society.)
4. It seems a vast undertaking, but Catholic Social teaching tells us how to go about it. We need to join with others and study this teaching and then see the action we can take. We need to join forces with all the groups working for the common good, the good of all.
5. It is only in solidarity, working together, that we can bring about change.

Transition to the Eucharist

Let us go on now to the renewal and strengthening of our bond with Christ and each other in this Mass, as branches of the vine that is Christ.

Christ renews our Covenant bond with him and each other in the power of his blood. We offer ourselves with him to be purified of our self-seeking and to be strengthened in our union with him and each other: "this is the cup of my blood of the new covenant"