

**That God is Love,
Commentary on John 15: 1-8**
“Me in thee, and thee in me...”

Homily

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Church of Our Saviour (Episcopal)

Mill Valley, CA USA

(North of San Francisco)

Fifth week of Easter

Wednesday Eucharist, May 13, 2009

Acts 15: 1-6

John 15: 1-8

Psalm 122

In the name of God: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is in Love, through the Church, Worship, and prayer; it is in Love, through acts of mercy, charity, and deeds for others; it is in Love, through following the poor and chaste Christ through the Church year—where we come to know and live in the way of Christ. This is called the Christian life. What this life entails is narrated through the Bible, in specific The New Testament. On this day we are reminded again that God seeks us in Love.

Our reading from John 15:1-8 says directly:

“I am the true vine, and my father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me...”

My life as an Oblate, received by the Camaldolese monastic order of St. Benedict 15 years ago, has opened to me a life lived as offering to God. Sometimes I think of it as Samson in the Bible who lived under a vow, and think that called by God I’ve responded and may hold a special fervor for Christ and Church, to abide in God and continue the Divine Call that brought me to live in the world as the Oblate does, rather than in a monastery, as does the Monk. This is a life of abiding in Christ, abiding in God, and a radical giving over to a more religious life.

One preached retreat at Immaculate Heart Hermitage in Big Sur,
California where Brother Bead spoke of The Rule of Saint Benedict, I

realized that this Holy Book was an excellence direction and resource for living life in a full. It is a directed way that is common to the monastic community of which I am a part. Having chosen to center my life around the daily office and worship and prayer, my interest is in living with the Parish as a centerpiece for life. With its many Biblical references and references to the Psalm in The Rule, I am helped in my direction for abiding in a manner consistent with John's, "*Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me...*"

Living with others in community, as I live the Parish life, and the monastic life in the world, I, like you, follow the poor, chaste Christ through the year.

"Me in thee, thee in me."

Love binds us.
We are friends in Christ.

That Christ invites us: it is an enormous hospitality of God that is extended anew through Christ. We are invited, and this is Grace--for we are accepted.

Like Dame Julian of Norwich, we learn the Lord's meaning that is brought to us through divine longing.

Love is his meaning.

Who shows it to us: Love.
What is shown: Love.
Why was it shown: Love.
We learn that Love is our Lord's meaning.

Christ in the Bible, Christ in the Church Fathers, Christ in the Church guides us. Though we may have different approaches and needs, we are united in Christ. For example, as a contemplative, I seek Union with God. This is an unknowing knowing. One lives with the contradictions, lives with the questions of Christ and those of the Church. This includes those mysteries that we find in the Bible.

The invitation to God is the result of God's love, not our love of God. Humans cannot be so perfect as to regard God in a manner as He regards humans. Though we bless God "for our creation, preservation, / and all the blessing of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love/ in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ..." and may do this daily, it is God's grace that gives us these freedoms. This gift of Christ is a result of God's love for woman and mankind

A relationship has many dimensions, as any love affair.

Being angry with God is not failing to love God. Asking why did this happen; having doubts, is a way of reaching and moving towards love. These are points of starting that enables us to enter into love. Otherwise the stumbling block becomes our own emotional failure. One must be true to our own feelings and thoughts. Emotional honesty is required. It is not one who is angry who is a failure, but when one is denying dishonest self-awareness in the relationship with God. This honesty, and knowing oneself in Christ is a job itself, and all of us as Christians work at this task. It is part of the vineyard work.

Abiding as resting in Christ, in the spirit of the Church—is balm. It is comfort. As Archbishop Rowan Williams says, “Church is something that happens, a verb before it is a noun.” Church is a vineyard of Christ, and the Church asks, even tells us, that the world is Christ’s vineyard, as our lives are engaged and lived in the vineyard. We labor in God, who is Love.

Love is a verb before it is a noun. Love acts upon us, as we live in the history of God in our lives, and within our nation and community. It is common for us to offer guidance and moral community in Christ, and we do this personally and corporately. Each member helps the other along the way. We express this help and caring each Sunday. One example is: Each Sunday we offer each other “...the peace of the Lord...” This offer is our desire that each of us experience Christ’s peace.

As an Oblate, I enjoyed meeting acceptance and understanding of the requests made of an Oblate in one’s life. This is called Postulancy. Postulancy lasts at the least a year. The Oblate Introduction says:

Long before the coming of Christ, humanity's quest for the Absolute gave rise (and bears) throughout the centuries ... witness to the divine destiny of the human person and to the presence of the Spirit in the hearts of all who seek to know what is true and ultimately real. ...[E]very Christian call witnesses to that dimension present interiorly in every other Christian.

For as our reading says, and as we live and learn as Christians we recognize in each other Christ, and our faith in heart, deed, and word. We believe in the seen and unseen:

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.” So we learn to “...feed the poor, and homeless,” as we do through our work in providing a meal to them, so we learn to “...worship regularly in Church, as we do on Sundays and other days, so we learn to “...introduce others to Christ, as we do by being a light to the world.

We seek God together as we abide in God in Christ together.

More from the Rule for Camaldoli Oblates:

As sincere seekers of God (RB 58, 7) we approach God as sons and daughters. We center our lives on the encounter with God, which finds expression in forms of prayer handed down in early Christian, patristic and monastic traditions. Ultimately, our prayer seeks to become the very prayer of the Holy Spirit within our hearts.

This statement of the Rule for Oblates is genuine for me. I believe it will resonate with you, for we experience prayer in Church together this day. I find that my own yearnings are fulfilled in my divine search, as I rest in the prayers. This form of abiding in Christ is one of many we may practice or know. It is within the Church, that means of offering from generation to generation life in Christ, that we find meaning and direction.

Through the centuries mankind and womankind have experienced the divine search, and the words of John have been revelation, comfort and instruction: *“I am the true vine, and my father is the vine grower...Abide in me as I abide in you.”*

Let me end with this blessing: The Lord bless us and keep us. *Amen.* The Lord Make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. *Amen.* The Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace. *Amen.*