

Confía y Obedece [Trust and Obey]

¡Aleluya! Cristo ha resucitado!

Que las palabras de mi boca y la meditación de nuestro corazón sean aceptables ante tus ojos, oh Señor, mi roca y mi salvación. Amén. [Salmos 19:14]

In today's Gospel reading from John, Jesus is continuing to prepare His disciples to carry on His work after His crucifixion and resurrection. This time, Jesus and His disciples were in the upper room on the night before His crucifixion. Jesus sought to comfort His disciples; for the road that lie ahead for them and for the journey that they were to undertake. In addition to providing comfort, Jesus also sought to admonish and warn His disciples; because He knew that the hour of His death would be a time of spiritual danger for them, and that the devil would seek to tempt them in every way possible. In fact, later that evening, Judas would betray Jesus and hand Him over to the authorities, and, as Jesus had foretold earlier in John's Gospel [John 13:38], Simon Peter would deny Him three times.

In this lesson, Jesus uses an agricultural metaphor about grape vineyards to describe the relationship between Him, God, and the disciples. Jesus tells His disciples that "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower." Jesus tells His disciples that every branch that abides in the true vine (Jesus) and bears fruit, the Father will prune to make it more abundant; and those branches that do not abide in the true vine will wither, and be discarded: Withered, gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. Although the pruning process can be painful – as were the challenges faced by the disciples as they sought to spread the Gospel after Jesus crucifixion and resurrection, and for us as we live into and spread the Gospel today by our words and deeds – pruning is necessary for Jesus' disciples, then and now, just as with grapevines; to make them and us stronger, more resilient, robust, and abundant.

Jesus tells His disciples that He has prepared them to take on this mission – reminding them that they "have already been cleansed by the word that [He has] spoken to [them]." And, Jesus tells the disciples that this work is not His alone, telling them: "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"; again, reminding them that "I am the vine, you are the branches." Jesus then tells His disciples that: "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."

On one level, Jesus' message is simple, comforting, and reassuring – telling us that to achieve salvation, we must abide in Jesus. According to the dictionary, to *abide* is to

accept, or act in accordance with a rule, decision, or recommendation; to obey, observe, or follow; to uphold, heed, or accept; or acknowledge, respect, or defer. Jesus wants His disciples to emulate Him, to put His teachings into practice, and continue the work of spreading the Gospel.

Later in the 15th Chapter of John, Jesus adds further comfort and reassurance for the disciples, telling them:

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

Jesus continues, explaining the nature of His love for His disciples, saying:

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

On a practical level, Jesus knew that, for the disciples, being an abundant branch might be easier said than done, especially after His death and resurrection, so He continues, explaining how the world will hate them because they are **of Christ** and not **of the world**, but, in John 17, Jesus prays to God, asking the Father to sanctify them in the truth of His word and be with them.

We too are Jesus' disciples and, as such, we too are called to abide in Him and bear fruit abundantly. To do so, we must have faith, trust in Jesus as our Lord – that His will for us will be fulfilled. Following the Lord is not always easy. Sometimes Satan is waiting just around the corner. We must, stand up, not be afraid and do His will in all things; much like those courageous students of Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School in Parkland Florida that I preached about two weeks ago.

While most of us may never be put to this kind of test, the strength and courage of these extraordinary students and others who stood up and were not afraid is epitomized in the closing words of President John F. Kennedy's 1961 Inaugural Address.

Obviously, President Kennedy recognized that we all are called to be disciples when he said:

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

The theme of today's Gospel lesson – *Trust and Obey* – reminds me of a hymn that I remember singing in the Baptist church when I was a child and later when I was a member of my high school's Gospel Choir. For me, this hymn – *Trust and Obey* – was a source of reassurance that Jesus would attend to all of my needs if I would have faith in Him and abide in His word.

The words of reassurance in this hymn promise:

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Quando caminamos con el Señor a la luz de Su Palabra,
¡Qué gloria arroja en nuestro camino!
Mientras hacemos Su buena voluntad, Él permanece con nosotros
todavía,
Y con todos los que confiarán y obedecerán.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

Ni una sombra puede elevarse, ni una nube en el cielo,
Pero su sonrisa rápidamente lo aleja;
No es una duda o un miedo, ni un suspiro ni una lágrima,
Puede permanecer mientras confiamos y obedecemos.

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,
But is blessed if we trust and obey.

No es una carga que soportamos, no una tristeza que compartimos,
Pero nuestro trabajo lo paga abundantemente;
No es una pena o una pérdida, ni un ceño fruncido o una cruz,
Pero es bendecido si confiamos y obedecemos.

But we never can prove the delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows, for the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

Pero nunca podemos probar las delicias de su amor
Hasta que todos en el altar yaciéramos;
Por el favor que muestra, por la alegría que otorga,
Son para ellos quienes confiarán y obedecerán.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.

Entonces en compañerismo dulce nos sentaré a Sus pies,
O caminaremos a su lado en el camino;
Lo que ÉL dice que haremos, a donde ÉL nos envíe, iremos;
Nunca temas, solo confía y obedece.

And, the refrain reminds us...

Y, el estribillo nos recuerda...

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Confía y obedece, porque no hay otra manera
Ser feliz en Jesús, pero confiar y obedecer.

¡Aleluya! Cristo ha resucitado!

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Amen.