

5th Wednesday of Easter. 5/5/2021

I am the vine, you are the branches.

We continue to hear today about the life of the early Church. Paul and Barnabas had been sent to bring the message of salvation to remote communities, evangelizing both Jews and Gentiles. A controversy breaks out on how to live this new reality of the Church, as a continuation and fulfillment of the Jewish faith. What about circumcision and the Mosaic law, which have given identity to the Jewish people?

Paul and Barnabas go back to Jerusalem to meet together with the apostles and presbyters and see about this matter, leading to what is called the apostolic council of Jerusalem, the first council of the Church.

There are two camps on the issue, but the discussion is not about advancing personal opinions. It is not about finding a compromise between positions or pushing for a vision of the Church. Instead, it is about discerning the will of God for his Church. What is it that God wants for his Church in this particular time and place in history?

Conflicts come up. Dialogue is important and necessary.

This dialogue will be fruitful to the extent that we remain rooted in Christ and united to him.

Christ is the vine. We are the branches. It is through this union with him that we grow, that the Church grows, that conflicts are resolved, even if they take time. It is the life of Christ in us that produces buds, and flowers, and fruits – as long as we remain in him.

We continue to have challenges in the Church and in our personal lives. We do well to take actions to improve things, to fix what is broken, but let's not forget that we are branches, we are instruments of the love of God. For our lives to bear fruit, our priority needs to be to remain in Christ and seek to do God's will.

As we embrace Jesus in the Eucharist today, we ask him to help us remain united to him, so that our lives can bring his healing where there is conflict, and bring his love to those who don't know him.