

I wonder if we are willing to abide in anything, to immerse ourselves wholly in something, to allow anything to captivate our heart and life, to view our whole existence through that one lens? At first I want to say, no, no one would be willing to give of him or herself in that way. It sounds too constricting. But then I begin to think about the many things we give ourselves, our time, thought, energy to: jobs, families, hobbies, interests, activities.

Many of us are sports fans, we dress up, we go to games, we make the time. Some of us are “hard-wired” (if one can even use that metaphor today) to one or more electronic devices. Consider how much time you spend every day interacting with them, how much control they have over your life, how you react when the “net” goes down?

Yes, we are constantly abiding—constantly living in, taking residence in, fixing ourselves permanently on, many things in our lives. Our abiding speaks to our rooting.

We kid ourselves if we think that those things that root us are not affecting us, shaping us, transforming us. The proof of our shaping is evident all around us. That which we value, which we spend our time (not to mention money!) doing, the activities we engage in, our attitudes and ways of engagement, all speak to the things that captivate our hearts, are our “roots.” These things, in turn, produce “fruit”—the ways we think, feel, interact with others, the material things we acquire, even the physical effects on our bodies, for good or ill, in some cases.

Jesus uses the familiar scriptural metaphor of the vine and branches to describe both his abiding presence in us through the Holy Spirit, and his call to grow this relationship of abiding life in him.

As the Vine, Jesus’ roots are in God the Father. In taking on our human life Jesus is the unique visible expression of the Father. Though the sacrament of Baptism, sealed in Confirmation, and continually nourished in the Holy Eucharist, we are “grafted” on to, “connected” to and invited to grow and bear fruit in Jesus as the “Way, the Truth, and the Life”. The result of this abiding rootedness is that we bear the fruit of his life in our lives. At the same time, we exist not as an isolated branch, but are organically connected to, bear

fruit with and in union with, all other believers also grafted on to Jesus the Vine. This is what the Church is all about.

Our Scripture readings pose fundamental faith questions to us. What is the nature and depth of our “rootedness” in Jesus? Do we truly live the truth of his abiding in us and we in him? What is the quantity and quality of the “fruit” our connectedness to Jesus is bearing?

Last year our parish began a three year association with the organization “Evangelical Catholic”. A main goal of “Evangelical Catholic” is to invite us to deepen our “rootedness” in Jesus’. The primary way of doing this is through the practice of daily reading, reflection and prayer with the Scriptures, especially the gospels. We have been challenged to give 1% of our time (15 minutes) a day to our relationship with Jesus. The next phase of this invitation to spiritual growth will be to consider being a member of a small faith sharing group. Our parish already has several informal groups. As we continue our journey with “Evangelical Catholic” more information will be forthcoming. In conjunction with this, I want to again issue an invitation to you to consider signing up for a weekly hour of Eucharistic Adoration. I have made a commitment to a daily holy hour and have derived great spiritual growth from it. The testimony we’ve heard from fellow parishioners who have committed themselves to an hour per week of Eucharistic Adoration and the effects on their life testifies to the fruit of such practice. If Eucharistic Adoration, or the 1% Challenge are not possible for you now, we have a number of other prayer resources available to you. Even five or ten minutes spent in prayer with Jesus each day will bear fruit. I recently read a report that on average (and personal observation would indicate more often) people check their electronic devices every nineteen minutes daily. Imagine what spiritually would happen if these same people, us, uttered even a short prayer such as: “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner” every nineteen, or every three minutes daily!

“I am the vine, you are the branches. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

Fr Jim Secora