

MYSTOGIA
A Vision of Bearing Fruit
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The Church identifies the period of time between Easter and Pentecost as the Easter season. This period of time is also called "Mystogogy." It simply means the telling of the stories of the resurrection, and how these stories impact our lives. They deliver a message of profound importance that too often gets overlooked or ignored.

We have heard the story of the Good Shepherd and the many sheep. We have heard the story of the true vine and many branches. We have heard the story of a man laying down his life for a friend. The common theme of these Gospel accounts is a description of "community." What a community is, what it does and what its goals are. These are the relationships of Christ to Christians. The vine represents a community of life. The vine and the branches suggest the activity of Christian life - to bear fruit. To bear fruit is a condition of life with Christ.

As Jesus is the vine, so the branches are His Disciples, and we are His Disciples also. If we remain fruitless, the Father will remove us, because it is by the power of the Father that we produce fruit. If we do not produce fruit, we do not have the power of the Father in us. The vine suggests the fertility of Faith. The vine is the sharing of the same life as Christ, which is a source of power and activity. Therefore the community of life shared with Christ is the condition of bearing fruit.

Jesus identifies Himself as, "I am the true vine." On the surface it seems rather odd to refer to one's self as a vine. However there are many characteristics of the vine that truly symbolize Jesus' ministry. There are so few plants that are so completely dependent on both the careful and skilled work of man and the rhythm of the seasons, as the vine. It is rich in prospect and at the same time touched with

mystery. The vine is worth nothing except in its fruit. While the wood of the vine is worthless and barren branches good only for the fire, the fruit of the branches make us happy and holy. The mystery is that if the vine does produce fruit it brings JOY to the owner. But if it does not produce fruit it is condemned to the fire of destruction.

Jesus summarizes the history of the chosen people by saying, "The Father still awaits fruit from His vine." Rather than listen to the Prophets that God sent to them, the vinedressers mistreated them. As the greatest manifestation of God's love for the vine, He sends His only Son. In response to this love, the leaders of the people climaxed their fruitlessness by killing the Son. Therefore the guilty are punished, while the Son opens a new chapter in God's plan.

Now the vine is given to new and conscientious vinedressers and will finally bear fruit. Who are these new vinedressers? You and I now take up the job of producing fruit. This gospel passage provides us with yet another VISION; a vision of the future. As Jesus was transfigured at His resurrection, so we too, soon will be transformed. For, as the individual grape is a member of a bunch of grapes on one stalk; the fruit of the bunch and the sap of the vine, we are all gathered into one community. When the vinedresser harvests the bunch of grapes and places them into the wine-press, each grape submits its individuality to the whole where it is transformed into the perfect wine. Blended perfectly with all the other grapes into the perfect community of heaven.

As we are pruned from the vine, the legacy of our love for Christ becomes the starting point for the next generation of grapes destined for the winepress. If we do not produce more good fruit, then our legacy of life becomes not wine but vinegar.

Jesus established the Church as His vineyard. The first vineyard consisted of the twelve Apostles and expanded from there, through the ages to us. Christ lives in the fruit of His vineyard. He lives so close to us that He likened it to a vineyard and its branches.

The vine, the branches and the fruit all depend on the very same sap-
-the love of the Father.

You and I are the fruit of the harvest. How have we developed as God's people preparing for our harvest? A bruised, sour or unripe grape will be plucked from the bunch by the vinedresser and discarded, for they will not be fit for the winepress of Heaven. Living the teaching of Jesus in our daily lives on earth is actually the preparation for living in the community life where we will enjoy the sweetness of perfection in the heavenly vineyard. Now is the time to develop our full potential, so we may inspire future harvests by our love of God. This year, how did the story of the resurrection of Jesus affect your life? How do you hang on the vine of life? We must answer these questions to be fruitful.