

“Transformation in Christ”

1. **Dealing with Saul:** Saul tried to join the disciples in Jerusalem, but they were afraid of him, thinking he was trying to trick them to persecute them some more. It was only when Barnabas vouched for him that they took Saul in. A good spiritual lesson for all of us. People can change who have previously lived an evil life: *murderers, abortionists, ppl involved in having abortions or promoting it, fornicators, active homosexuals, corrupt business people, corrupt politicians (that’s a little more rare ☺), slanderers and haters of various sorts, people who have been selfish in their marriages by not being generous with God in regards to children, adulterers, and just people living for own will and desires in any number of areas.* The bottom line is God is going to try to reach even the greatest sinner – but they have to be open to God’s grace as Saul was when the Lord humbled him by knocking him off his high horse. We too often need to be humbled in a profound way before we allow the Lord to take over in our life and to depend on Him for everything. **Our Lady** helps in this process too, as I know from my own life, both before I was a priest and as a priest to this day. **The thing is though, the Lord and Our Lady love us so much that they will humble us, but never humiliate us – always proposing a better way of doing things instead of just reprimanding us and telling us how horrible we are.** We need to emulate that in our own dealings with other people – esp. if we are parents when we discipline our children to always show them that we correct them because we love them. And tough love, when necessary, is only for a greater good long term.
2. **We need to love in deed and truth rather than merely in word and speech:** It’s easy to say we believe in God and “love” Him, but the true test is how we live day in and day out. Do we try consistently to live by His teachings in the 10 Commandments and all the doctrines of our Catholic Faith? We can only do it consistently by depending on His help: *the grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us in our Baptism.* Have we given our hearts over to the Lord? Saying daily: *do with me Lord as you will.* If we pray this more and more, then the spiritual fruit of that disposition

is a great **confidence in the Lord**. And from that we will have an increase of inner peace and joy and trust that whatever we ask of the Lord will be granted – but according to His holy will, and we are fine with that. That’s a sign that we are maturing in the Christian spiritual life. Whereas before we would say: *thy will be done*, but in reality often mean - my will be done!

3. **I am the Vine, you are the branches:** This Gospel passage has always stuck with me since I was a teenager because it literally saved a relative of mine from taking his own life during a very dark period he was going through as a struggling alcoholic called to give up alcohol for good. It is an amazing passage, again showing us the love the Lord has for each one of us that He wants us to be part of His life and mission for the salvation of as many souls as possible. It is because we are part of Jesus’s life and mission that our Heaven Father as Jesus says, prunes us spiritually to enable us to bear more spiritual fruit. **Hence all the sufferings and challenges we face in this early life have a divine purpose:** *to purify us of our past sins, to give us the grace and strength to avoid them in the future (regular reception of Confession is an essential part of this), and to offer our sufferings and challenges with Jesus in company with the Blessed Mother in reparation for the sins of all humanity and to help Jesus save other souls.* What more noble mission could there be than sharing in the mission to save souls? As I said last weekend in my homily encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life, that is the core of the holy ordained priesthood, but even if you are not called to be a priest or religious, every one of us by our Baptism is called by the Lord to help save souls, by our prayers, our sufferings united with Jesus, and by living our vocation well, for most of you in the married life, but also in the consecrated to God single life. Remember what Jesus says at the end of the Gospel today: He prays we are not cut off from the vine of His life by unrepented mortal sin, but rather that we always remain in Him, and as He puts it, *by this is my Father glorified, that you bear much spiritual fruit and become my disciples.* It is a process of becoming Jesus’s disciples, one day at a time, by His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit growing in the way of holiness. Never give up in dark times – but remember He is the vine, we are the branches. **Trust in Jesus always!** God bless you.