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PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ROMAN PARISH
"SANTA MARIA REGINA PACIS" IN OSTIA

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Fifth Sunday of Easter, 3 May 2015

[Multimedia]

Something Jesus often repeats, especially during the Last Supper, is: "Abide in me". Do not tire of me, abide in me. And Christian life is precisely this: *to abide in Jesus*. This is Christian life: to abide in Jesus. And Jesus, in order to explain to us what he means by this, uses this beautiful figure of the vine: "I am the true vine, you the branches" (cf. Jn 15:1). And every branch that is not joined to the vine ends up dying, it bears no fruit; and then is thrown away to feed the fire. Many are used for this, to feed the fire — they are very, very useful — but not in bearing fruit. Rather, the branches that are united to the vine receive the lifeblood and thus develop, grow and bear fruit. It's a simple, simple image. To abide in Jesus means to be united to Him in order to receive life from Him, love from Him; the Holy Spirit from Him. It's true, we are all sinners, but if we abide in Jesus, like the branches to the vine, the Lord comes. He prunes us a little, so that we can bear more fruit. He always takes care of us. But if we detach from Him, if we do not abide in the Lord, we are Christians in name only, but not in life; we are Christians, but dead ones, because we bear no fruit, like branches broken away from the vine.

To abide in Jesus means to be willing to receive life from Him, as well as pardon, even pruning, but to receive it from Him. To abide in Jesus means to seek Jesus, to pray, prayer. To abide in Jesus means to approach the sacraments: the Eucharist, Reconciliation. To abide in Jesus — and this is the most difficult thing — means to do what Jesus did, to have the same attitude as Jesus. But when we "slur" someone else [speaking badly of others], for example, or when we gossip, we do not abide in Jesus. Jesus never did this. When we are liars, we do not abide in Jesus. He never did this. When we cheat others with the dirty deals that are available to everyone, we are dead branches, we do not abide in Jesus. To abide in Jesus is to do the things that he did: to do good, to help others, to pray to the Father, to care for the sick, to help the poor, to have the joy of the

Holy Spirit.

A beautiful question for us Christians is this: do I abide in Jesus or am I far from Jesus? Am I united to the vine that gives me life or am I a dead branch, that is incapable of bearing fruit, giving witness? And there are other branches too, of which Jesus does not speak here, but he speaks about them elsewhere: those who make themselves look like disciples of Jesus, but they do the opposite of Jesus' disciple: these are hypocritical branches. Perhaps they go to Mass every Sunday, perhaps their face looks like a holy card, all pious, but then they live like pagans. And Jesus calls them hypocrites in the Gospel. Jesus is good, he invites us to abide in Him. He gives us the strength, and if we slide into sin — we are all sinners — He forgives us, because He is merciful. But what He wants are these two things: that we abide in Him and that we are not hypocrites. And with this a Christian life moves forward.

And what does the Lord give us if we abide in Him? We just heard it: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (Jn 15:7). The power of prayer: "Ask whatever you will", that is, prayer is so powerful that Jesus does whatever we ask of him. However if our prayer is weak — if it is not done sincerely in Jesus — prayer does not bear its fruit, because the branch is not united to the vine. But if the branch is united to the vine, that is, "if you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you". And this is the almighty prayer. Where does the omnipotence of this prayer come from? From abiding in Jesus; from being united to Jesus, like the branch to the vine. May the Lord grant us this grace.