

We've all had persons in our lives who always made us feel special, and thanks be to God for that, because what would life be like without them? The persons who always were there for you and made you feel like you were the greatest thing in the world, and to them, you were and you still are, even if they are no longer with us. The persons who had infinite patience with us and who went out of their way to do whatever they can for us- the persons who inspired us to do things we never thought we could do- the persons who loved us and showed us they loved us, even when we thought we were not worth loving.

I've had so many- members of my family, teachers from every stage of my educational journey, some of my fellow friars, so many of you guys who have made my life as a pastor so enjoyable and so fulfilling. And you can come up with a list of your own, and maybe you should do just that- in your prayer, call to mind these special people in your life and humbly ask the Lord's blessing upon them.

And this may sound strange to say, but Jesus had his own special people. We know that Jesus had many people in His life who He truly loved- His family of course, but also many close friends- many people who were with Him and took care of Him and loved Him enough to leave everything behind to follow Him. It goes without saying that Jesus was inspired by these people as much as He inspired them- He was shaped and formed into the person He was by the love and example of His family and friends just as much as He was a powerful influence on them.

But of course, there's something even more when we talk about Jesus. Jesus was the Son of God, the ultimate presence of God in the world, the love of God for the world made flesh. Jesus was so filled with the Spirit of God that He could not help but radiate the love and the mercy and the compassion of God to all the people He met- all those people who society looked down upon but who God loved and treasured no matter what.

Jesus was so filled with the Spirit of God- He felt so loved by His Father- that He was able to do incredible things during His ministry- He healed those who were sick and who were brought low by life; He reconciled people to one another; He was able to confront and challenge the society that caused such needless suffering and that perpetuated injustice and inequality. And all because He was loved and He knew He was loved.

The Spirit of God that was in Jesus was the fruit of the intimate and unbreakable relationship Jesus had with God the Father, and it was that Spirit that gave Jesus the power to do all that he did. And the good news is that the Spirit of God that was in Jesus is within each and every one of us as well. When we were baptized, we were given the Spirit so that we could be united to God the Father through Jesus Christ. This Spirit is still present and active in us at every moment, inspiring us and urging us on to do whatever we can to share the love of God that we ourselves have received.

As we heard in today's Gospel, Jesus is the vine and we are the branches- Jesus is the source of our life and of our strength and we are all members of his Body. As Jesus says, "*Without me you can do nothing*" but He also says that those who remain in him will bear much fruit. So every time that we make an act of faith in Jesus and every time that we make an effort to do something good in Jesus' name, we are using that power that has been given to us by Jesus through the Spirit and we are doing whatever we can, whether it's big or small, to make a difference in our world.

The classic image is a stone that is thrown into a lake. The ripples go far beyond where the stone hit the water- in the same way, our actions can have an impact far beyond what our original intentions or thoughts were. What we think of as small actions- giving a kind word or even just a moment of your time to a person who is going through some difficulties, doing a

favor for somebody, saying a prayer for someone- can make a real difference in someone's life and that love that we showed will then spread further and further.

So we pray in thanksgiving for all those persons in our lives who made such a difference for us and we pray for all those whose lives we can make better in some way. Jesus will continue to empower us and we can do more with that power than we can ever imagine. It's amazing what love can do...