

Sunday, August 14, 2016

## Hail to You O Vine

In a glorification hymn for St. Mary, we say “**Hail to you O vine... Whose fruitful branches blossom**”. What does this mean? Is St. Mary the vine or is the vine the Lord Jesus Christ as mentioned in John 15?



To answer this, we say:

**The vine is Jesus Christ in one sense and St. Mary in another.**

**The first concept which is that the vine is the Lord Jesus Christ** is clear in His words: *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit"* (John 15:5). This wonderful concept is not the subject of this article and needs another context.

**The second meaning is that the vine is the Virgin Mary**, whom we address everyday in the third hour prayer saying: **“You are the true vine who bore the cluster of life, we ask you o full of grace with the apostles for the salvation of our souls.”** The meaning here is clear which is that the virgin is like a beautiful vine that brought forth a great fruit that is life-giving for humanity. The virgin is the vine that bore this Divine cluster and brought Him to us to live through Him.

Indeed, **this wonderful meaning has biblical roots in the Old Testament.** There is a wonderful story mentioned in the Book of Numbers when Moses the prophet sent 12 men to explore the promised land. The people of Israel at that time had already completed their journey in Sinai and were at the threshold of Canaan ready to enter. Moses command to those men was to explore everything in that land, geographically and regarding the status of the people living there and even regarding the types of plants. He asked them to bring back some fruits so that people can see models of the fruits of this rich land. Thus, their faith would be strengthened by God’s true promises and they would long to enter this land.

The men went and brought back some fig and pomegranate fruits. They also brought one very large cluster of grapes to the extent that they hanged it on a big rod carried by 2 men on both sides. The people were amazed by it. When they returned, the men’s report was that the land was truly abundant in milk and honey and these are its fruits (Num. 13-14).

The cluster was the first view of what the people would see later in the promised land. God wanted them to see the fruit in order to show them that they were close to enter the place of rest and were about to complete their sojourning.

**It is known that the journey of the people of Israel towards the promised land is a simplified image of our current spiritual journey towards Heavenly Jerusalem. As God allowed that people to see the fruits of the promised land before they entered there, He arranged for us to enjoy the taste of the heavenly life and Kingdom while we are still on earth.**

In the story of incarnation, **St. Mary was the vine that bore to us the Lord Jesus, the cluster of life who gave us the new life through His blood that was shed for our sake. When we quench our thirst continuously from the juice of this cluster through the Eucharist, we enjoy the taste of His Kingdom while we are still in the flesh and we long to continue our march towards the eternal, glorious promised land..**

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