“I am the Vine. You are the branches.” About what kind of vine is Jesus speaking? ... The vine is divine life and love. Jesus declares, “I am the true vine. And my Father is the vine-grower.” The life source of the vine is divine life which the Father and Jesus share. Jesus wants to share with us his divine life.

Jesus exhorts his disciples to seek and to develop an on-going relationship with himself. He urges us, “Remain in me as I remain in you. ... Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.” What fruit does Jesus want us to bear? ... If we live in and by divine life, then the words and deeds we express will bear, carry, bring forth divine-like, Christ-like words and deeds.

Friends, ponder how profound is this gift which Jesus is offering to you individually and to all believers communally. Just as God had promised to the Jews in the Old Testament, “I will take away from you your stony hearts, and will give you a human heart,” (Ez 36:26), so Jesus promises us the experience of his life and love. Let’s look at Jesus on the cross behind the altar. ... Privately ponder the greatness of sharing in the depth and breadth of his divine life and love. ... Imagine how different your individual life would be! ... Imagine how you would feel inside? ... Imagine how you would relate to people outside yourself? ... Imagine how different our society would be if people would participate in and shared life in Jesus Christ.

In the two verses which follow immediately after this morning’s gospel, Jesus reveals his motives and means for experiencing this offer. ... “ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Live on in my love. All this I tell you so that my joy might be yours, and that your joy may be complete. ... I no longer call you slaves. I call you friends.” (Jn 15:9,11,15)

The one means that Jesus requires is this: “You will live in my love if you keep my commandments” (Jn 15:10)

How marvelous is Jesus’ message, yes? ... The structure of John’s gospel reveals a special emphasis which Jesus gives to this promise. In earlier chapters, John has reported seven miracles which are followed by seven “I AM” phrases. The miracles include changing water into wine, 2) feeding the crowd of 5,000 men, 3) walking on water, 4) healing blind man, 5) a lame man, 6) and a very ill man, and 7) raising Lazarus from the dead. Miracles like these and many more than these are reported in the three Synoptic gospels.

Only John, however, adds, the “I AM” phrases. The seven miracles alert people that Jesus possesses divine power. By the seven “I AM” phrases Jesus declares that he personally is divine. Remember in the Old Testament when Moses asks God how to identify himself, God declares, “I AM WHO AM.” (Ex. 3.14)
And later in the writings of Isaiah, God inspires the prophet to speak on God’s behalf, “I am He, I am the first, and I am the last.” (Is. 48.12)

John now uses the “I AM” phrases to declare emphatically that Jesus is God. In those seven phrases Jesus declares,

- “I am the bread of life” (6:35, 41, 48, 51);
- “I am the light of the world.” (8:12);
- “I am the one bearing witness to myself, ... that I am from above [and] not of this world.” (8:18, 23);
- “I am the sheep-gate. ... I am the good shepherd.” (10:7, 9, 11, 14);
- “I am the resurrection and the life.” (11:25);
- “I am the way, the truth and the life.” (14:6);
- “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ... I am the vine, and you are the branches.” (15:1, 5).

When we hear the gospel and this homily, and when we receive the sacrament of Jesus’ Body and Blood, we have opportunity to ponder at those special moments and many other times throughout the day, that Jesus continuously offers us the gift of his divine life and love. This gift is not ordinary life and love. This gift is a foretaste of heaven, a glimpse of eternal life, a profound moment which beckons us to enjoy divine life and love, now and forever.

Jesus identifies us, “I am the Vine. You are the branches.” He assures us, “Whoever abides in me and I in him will bear much fruit, and will live forever.” He directs, “You will live in my love if you keep my commandments” (Jn 15: ... )