



Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time • August 22, 2021

Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b • Ephesians 5:21-32 or 5:2a, 25-32

Gospel of John 6:60-69

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?"
Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, "Does this shock you?
What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?"

It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail.

The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe."

Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him.

And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father."

As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.

Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"

Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go?"

You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe
and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

REFLECTION

This month, we have been hearing Jesus' teaching on the Bread of Life from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John.

This Sunday Jesus concludes his discourse on his "perfection of the Mosaic gift of bread from Heaven" through the gift of himself. His invitation to come and eat and drink of his flesh and blood, food that will ensure that those who come to it in faith will remain in Christ, and Christ in them, is met with disbelief and separation by many who had counted themselves among his disciples. This passage is often called "the crisis" in the Gospel of John. "This saying is hard; who can accept it?"

Gospel brings us to the reality that making these radical changes in our lives will not be easy. Just as in Jesus' time, people listened to His words, and chose to turn away from Him, "as a result, many disciples turned to their former way of life." Sin is enticing but deathly.

Becoming a follower of Christ is life-giving and freeing. Peter reminds us to stay faithful and committed to Christ, "You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

DISCUSSION

1. Both the First Reading and the Gospel are concerned with choice. The Israelites gave reasons for choosing to serve the Lord. “For it was the Lord, our God who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, ... performed miracles, ... and protected us.” What is your reason for choosing God in your life?
2. Do you have more invested in a choice you made, or a choice someone else made for you? How does that work for faith, if you are a Catholic since childhood? In your opinion do you think God gave you free will?
3. Jesus asks, “Do you also want to leave?” If you were there at the time would you be one of the many disciples who returned to his/her former way of life or one that stayed with Jesus? Is there any middle ground here?
4. According to Pope Francis (below) how do we become inserted into Christ’s immense work of salvation? When and how does Christ sharpen our spiritual vision with his love? How does Eucharist play a role? How does Mass? *“Lord, to whom shall we go?” We too, who belong to the Church today, pose this question. Even if it is more hesitant on our lips than on Peter’s, our answer, like that of the Apostle, can only be the person of Jesus. Yes, he lived 2000 years ago. But we can encounter him in our own time when we listen to his Word and are near to him in a special way in the Eucharist. ... May the Holy Mass never become a superficial routine for us! May we draw more and more from its profundity! It is precisely the Mass that inserts us in Christ’s immense work of salvation, to sharpen our spiritual vision by his love: by his “prophecy in act” with which, at the Last Supper, he initiated the gift of self on the cross; by his irrevocable victory over sin and death, which we boldly and festively proclaim. “We need to learn how to live the Holy Mass.”- Message of Pope Francis on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress*

PRAYING IN SERVICE TO THE LORD

As we strive each day to live intentionally as disciples of Christ, it starts with commitment — incorporating personal daily prayer and increasing that prayer week by week, incorporating prayer into our families, our marriages, frequenting the sacraments, and serving others. Through this time with the Lord and service to those around us, He will reveal where to go next.

As Joshua proclaimed, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Consider, either in silence or in open reflection, how you will do so in the next week. Bring your goals forward, and pray for the strength to live our lives in service to the Lord.