

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, 22 August 2021

Scriptures: Joshua 24:1-2,15-18; Eph. 5:2, 25-32; John 6:60-69

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the Old Testament reading from the Book of Joshua, we find the various tribes of Israel, first recalling how they were liberated from slavery and guided through the wilderness; and, then, resolving to serve their God who saved them.

In the Gospel reading, the very claim of Jesus to the bread of life challenges many followers to the point of desertion. But others, like Peter, have come to realize that Jesus is the one to whom they turn, and the one whom we serve.

The Gospel of John now brings us to the end of the lengthy discourse on the bread of life. It is now the moment of decision.

For the past few weeks, we have been listening and reflecting on readings from chapter 6 of John's Gospel. We have seen Jesus manifesting his glory through the feeding of the five thousand; he has walked on water; and, now, following his teaching on the need to receive Communion to find life, he awaits a response. The disciples have witnessed his divinity through his "signs". They have heard him put into words what they have seen before their eyes. Now it is decision time. Seeing and hearing all that Jesus is about, are they prepared to commit all to him? Do they believe that he is the one through whom they can find access to God?

Obviously, it is all too much for some of those who have been following Jesus. The challenge seems too great. A free choice is being given and, for different reasons, some leave the path that God is presenting them with. Whether their minds get the better of their hearts that has burned in love for him, we will never know. However, Jesus makes it clear that the truth is what is

being presented before them. In challenging the twelve apostles to make their choice, it is Peter who steps up and makes the connection between all that he has seen and heard. "Where else would we go?" he asks. Inspired by the Spirit, Peter leaves us with a question to help us deepen our own appreciation of the gift God has given us in the person of Jesus Christ.

There will always be times, it seems, when things just do not make sense; times when there is the temptation to move away from God; times we are hurt, angry, burdened, or even shocked and scandalized.

But however difficult the journey of life, and the cost of discipleship, may be at times, there is the constant invitation and call for us to reflect on God's goodness, and to keep making positive choices for Jesus.

Jesus gave the disciples a choice. He presents us with that same choice. When Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, he asked them the same question that we are asked today. Whom do you wish to serve? Considering how Jesus has brought us liberation from sin, freedom from the despair of overpowering burdens, and the promise of eternal life, perhaps we will be able to echo Peter's stunning statement regarding Jesus' challenge: Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus promises are true. Where else can we go? We will serve Jesus.

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