

AUGUST 22, 2021
Sunday of the 21st Week in Ordinary Time
John 6: 53, 60-69

“JESUS, MY LIFE AND MY ALL!”

“There was this seminarian, who was in the last year of his priestly studies. He had spent well over eight years preparing for his priesthood and was looking forward to his ordination, which was only a couple of months away. The invitations had been sent when suddenly he fell sick and the doctors were not able to diagnose his case. He was treated by a specialist but his sickness went from bad to worse. He was constantly depressed and started behaving strangely. This went on for some time. Finally his superior called him and politely informed him that because of his sickness he could not be ordained. It was like a bombshell! He could not believe what he was told! He walked to his room in silence and fell on his bed and burst into tears. His whole world was crumbling around him. All that he had prepared for eight long years, all that he had lived for, all that he had dreamed about had gone up in smoke. He was so angry with God. It was so unfair! As he sobbed, he banged his fists on the bed shouting: "You can't do it! You can't do it God!" As he went on shouting and sobbing his heart out, he slowly realized that He was telling God that He could not do it! Gradually he calmed down, his sobs lessened and he was able to softly mumble: "You can do it! You are my God!" He had surrendered to the Lord! A few weeks later when he went to his doctor, it was discovered that by mistake he was given the wrong dosage of medicine that was causing the strange reaction. After the error was corrected, the young man soon returned to normal. He was allowed to continue his priestly studies and a month later, to his great joy he was ordained a priest of God. At his ordination he felt that the priesthood was not something he deserved, something he

merited, but a gift from the Lord, who can do anything with our lives. Are we ready to surrender our dearest plans to the Lord?"¹ Are we decided to give all and follow our Lord?

All our readings point to one thing: decision-making. It is necessary to decide what path, life or answer we need to take in terms of our faith, and that decision is now. In our first reading, Prophet Joshua addressed and challenged the people of Israel to stand and follow the God who has done so much for them. "Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."² Joshua is reminding them that they must be firm in their decision as God is a jealous God and their faith in Him must be steadfast and strong. The people of Israel replied with a firm decision: "...we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God."³ While, the second reading "emphasizes the unity that must exist in the Body of Christ and the intimate relationship between Jesus and His followers. It also challenges the Ephesian Christians to make the right choice in life and build Christian marriages on mutual respect and love, accepting each other's rights and dignity. Jesus also uses the husband-wife relationship as an analogy to explain the close relationship between Christ and the Church. Paul reminds us that Jesus nourishes us, the members of His Church, through the Eucharist, making us His own flesh and blood, as husband and wife become one flesh. Concluding his long Eucharistic discourse, Jesus, in today's Gospel, challenges his Jewish audience, and later His apostles, to make their choice: to accept Him as the true Bread from Heaven Who gives them His Body and Blood as their Heavenly Food or to join those who have lost their Faith in Jesus and left Him, expressing their confusion and doubts about His claims. Today's passage describes the various reactions of the people to Jesus' claims. Many of the disciples leave, but the

¹ stories4homilies.blogspot.com

² Joshua 24: 15 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

³ Joshua 24: 18 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

apostles freely choose to stay with Jesus.”⁴ In our gospel, Jesus’ query to His apostles is a question for all of us too: “Do you also wish to go away?”⁵ We need to decide, are we for Christ or against Christ. “On Nov. 22, 1927, a man dressed in street clothes was led through a crowd of photographers and politicians on his way to a firing squad in Mexico City. The photographers were present for this illegal execution there had been no trial or even formal charges because the Mexican president, Plutarco Elias Calles, the most rabidly anti-Catholic leader in the world at the time, wanted them to record the humiliation of a man desperately pleading for his own life. Calles badly miscalculated. The man walked calmly to the place of his death, asked to be allowed to pray, and then, in a voice neither defiant nor desperate, intoned the words Viva Cristo Rey! (Long Live Christ the King!) Father Miguel Augustin Pro, a Jesuit priest and his fellow martyrs gave Mexico and the rest of the world an example of what it means to follow Christ the King against all the princes of this world.”⁶

My brothers and sisters, we need to make up our mind, our heart and have a decision about Jesus and His claim and challenge to follow Him, and accept His invitation to receive Him as the Bread of Life. Let us ask in this Eucharistic celebration that we may make a decision, profess and live our firm faith to Jesus Christ, and follow Him until the end of our lives. Are we going to leave the Lord? No, because He is our Bread of Life!

Let this be our prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, You have the words of eternal life. Help me to take away all fear, anxiety, and doubt and give my complete trust and joy in You. May I surrender all to You because You are my All and nothing more. May I also say: ‘Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.’ Amen.”

⁴ <http://frtonyshomilies.com/>

⁵ John 6: 67 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

⁶ www.catholiceducation.org