

HOMILY by Fr. Anthony Davis

“Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...”

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

Jos 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b; Eph. 5:21-32; Jn. 6: 60-69

The main thrust of this weekend’s readings is that Christian life is a series of daily choices for God or against God, as we choose to live out or reject the truths He has revealed through His prophets in the Old Testament and especially, in these last days, through His Son Jesus in the New Testament.

They remind us that the fundamental choice we make determines how we live our lives. And so **today we are challenged to decide whom we will serve both as priests and laity in the Church of Christ called the Roman Catholic Church.**

In the 1st. reading, Joshua challenges the Israelites to decide whom they will serve- **the gods of their fathers, the gods of the Amorites in whose country they are then dwelling or the God of Israelites Who has done so much for them.**

The Renewal of Covenant ceremony in Joshua 24 reminds us that the Eucharist is a Covenant meal that calls for a decision of Faith.

Paul, in the 2nd.reading, then emphasizes the unity that must exist in the Body of Christ and the intimate relationship between Jesus and His followers in the Church, by using the **“husband-wife relationship”** as an analogy, to urge the faithful community in Ephesus and us to **“Live in love, as Christ has loved us.”**

In other words, Paul wants them to make the right choice in life. He 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.

Then concluding his long Eucharistic discourse in today’s Gospel, Jesus challenges his Jewish audience to make their choice of accepting the New Covenant he offers in his Body and Blood, or of joining those who have lost their

Faith in him and left him, expressing their confusion and doubts about his claims. **Today's passage, thus, describes the various reactions of the people to Jesus' claims.** As Joshua spoke to his followers, Jesus speaks to the twelve apostles and gives them the option of leaving him or staying with him. Jesus had told them **"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him"**. But they don't understand. They say **"This is too hard to hear"**! The gospel then tells us: **"As a result, many of his disciples left Jesus..."** We do that too. We leave because we don't understand what is too hard to hear.

For instance, the news about the Church in Pennsylvania last week was terrible. There are no excuses for allowing that kind of abuse by these clergy perpetrators to be tolerated or continued. And we know it isn't just in Pennsylvania, but it is a disorder that has infected the Catholic Church across the country and around the world. For example, Pope Francis, during his recent Papal visit in Dublin, met with 8 of the victims of abuse and their families. **And so my heart bleeds and goes out to all those victims who suffered these atrocities. I pray for you everyday!!!**

Some of us, and rightly so, feel very angry, humiliated, betrayed, and may decide, this is too hard, I am going to leave the Church. The Catholic converts may now be hearing from your family and friends, "I told you so..."

My dear friend, St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: **"How great is the hope to which we are called"**. This is a time to be called to that hope because I believe our church will be healed from this, and our church will be changed and transformed for the better because of this. Indeed, from experience, we know that the church thrives and grows better in trials and crisis. Through these saints are born!!

So, what can we do beyond staying committed, with hope? We can ask for changes to bring the lay experience into internal procedures in the church. We can be part of a church committed to healing and reaching out to those who have become appalled, disillusioned, and disgusted. It won't be easy, but it will be blessed by the Holy Spirit working among us so that we might be more of the Church that we are called to be-the **"ONE, TRUE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH"**.

And so the Resp. Psalm (Ps 34), also encourages perseverance to the end, when we shall eventually "taste" (fully realize through personal experience), and "see" (everything, past, present and future, falling into place), "the goodness of the Lord!" Oh, let's always remember that even among the 12 Apostles, there was a Judas Iscariot!

Therefore, rather than rejecting/abandoning Jesus after all that he has done for us, let us stand together with "St. Peter our spokesperson", and assure Jesus saying: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life".

Yes, the apostles exercised their freedom of choice by choosing to stay with Jesus. The Lord Jesus is also saying to us, "SAY WITH ME..."(Mt.26:40). Let us also endure and stay and fix it together, as St. Peter encourages us once again, in 1Peter 1:7: "These trials show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold-though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world".

And Jesus asked the apostles: "Do you also want to leave me? And Peter replied: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...".