

**The Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
August 26, 2018

**Reading 1: Joshua 24: 1-2a, 15-17, 18b**

Joshua gathered together  
all the tribes of Israel at Shechem,  
summoning their elders, their leaders,  
their judges, and their officers.  
When they stood in ranks before God,  
Joshua addressed all the people:  
"If it does not please you to serve the LORD,  
decide today whom you will serve,  
the gods your fathers served beyond the River  
or the gods of the Amorites  
in whose country you are now dwelling.  
As for me and my household,  
we will serve the LORD."

But the people answered,  
"Far be it from us to forsake the LORD  
for the service of other gods.  
For it was the LORD, our God,  
who brought us and our fathers up  
out of the land of Egypt,  
out of a state of slavery.  
He performed those great miracles  
before our very eyes  
and protected us along our entire journey  
and among the peoples through whom we passed.  
Therefore we also will serve the LORD,  
for he is our God."

**PRAYER FOR HEALING VICTIMS OF ABUSE - FROM THE USCCB**

God of endless love,  
ever caring, ever strong,  
always present, always just:  
You gave your only Son  
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,  
join to your own suffering  
the pain of all who have been hurt  
in body, mind, and spirit  
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize  
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,  
soothe restless hearts with hope,  
steady shaken spirits with faith:  
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,  
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,  
heal your people's wounds  
and transform our brokenness.  
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,  
so that we may act with justice  
and find peace in you.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Reading 2: Ephesians 2a, 25-32**

Brothers and sisters:  
Live in love, as Christ loved us.  
Husbands, love your wives,  
even as Christ loved the church  
and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,  
cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,  
that he might present to himself  
the church in splendor,  
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,  
that she might be holy and without blemish.  
So also husbands should love their wives  
as their own bodies.  
He who loves his wife loves himself.  
For no one hates his own flesh  
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,  
even as Christ does the church,  
because we are members of his body.  
*For this reason*  
*a man shall leave his father and his mother*  
*and be joined to his wife,*  
*and the two shall become one flesh.*  
This is a great mystery,  
but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

**Gospel: 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."

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**Ven al Banquete/Come to the Feast**

*Ven, ven al banquete. Ven a la fiesta de Dios.  
Here the hungry find plenty, here the thirsty shall drink.  
Ven a la cena de Cristo, come to the feast.*

Like the child whose fishes and loaves  
fed the multitude,  
in the Lord the little we have,  
broken and shared, becomes abundant food.

'Til the seed is given to earth,  
it is just one grain;  
but once sown its death brings new birth,  
the harvest is rich; what's lost is raised again.

In the stranger by our side,  
in the least and last,  
in the thirst for justice we share,  
Christ is here in the breaking of the bread.

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**Psalm 34**

*Taste and see. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.  
Oh, taste and see. Taste and see,  
The goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.*

**Like the Bread**

*Like the bread, we are taken.  
Like the Christ, we are blessed  
On this altar we are broken  
giv'n as food that we might live  
giv'n as food that we might live*

How quickly we reject ourselves blinded from our call  
We resign to live in fear of love, of self, of all  
This is not the will of God for the chosen must be free  
We are taken by the love of Christ to live eternally.

Broken like the bread of life we often flee from pain  
We resign to live our lives not knowing death's true gain  
This is not the will of God for in dying we will live  
The cross, a sign of victory and of the healing it will give  
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**“Ground Rules” for Small Group Faith Sharing**

- Maintain confidentiality – “Whatever happens in small group stays in small group.”
- Judgment-free zone – You don't have to agree with every one, but you have to have respect for everyone.
- No “shut downs” or “put downs” – See Christ in one another, BE Christ to one another.
- Don't be a “discussion hog” – Be sure that everyone that wants to gets a chance to share.
- Leave room for the Spirit – Silence is OK! Not everyone has to share.
- Practice active listening – Avoid interrupting, fidgeting, criticizing, lecturing, or thinking of what you're going to say while another person is speaking.
- Questions are a guide - You do not have to answer all of them or go in order.
- Be open – God is doing amazing things!

**Petitions**

Our response: “Lord, you are the Holy One of God.”

**Closing Prayer**

In every age, O God, you give your people freedom to walk in faith or to turn away. Grant us grace to remain faithful to your Holy One, whose words are spirit and life, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

**Questions for Reflection**

1. What word or phrase resonated to you in the Gospel?
2. In the Gospel, 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?
3. How can Peter's words in the Gospel, “Master, to whom shall we go?” give help us in times when our faith is tried? How can they help us right now?
4. 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?
5. Consider Joshua's words in the First Reading. In what ordinary and simple ways does your “household” “serve the Lord”?
6. In the Second Reading, Paul compares the relationship between husband and wife with that between Christ and the Church. Why do you think he does this? What is the point?
7. Read Pope Francis' words below. According to him, how can we encounter Christ? In what other ways do we encounter Christ besides what Pope Francis identifies?

**Words from our Holy Father**

“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. . .

*-Pope Francis, National Eucharistic Congress of Germany, (Cologne, 5-9 June 2013, paragraph 3)*