

Sunday Message

TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • 25 August 2024 • Psalter Week 1



TO STAY
OR NOT
TO STAY
JOHN 6:60-69

In today's first reading, Joshua puts a direct challenge to the people of Israel. Make up your minds once and for all, he says: "If you will not serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve."

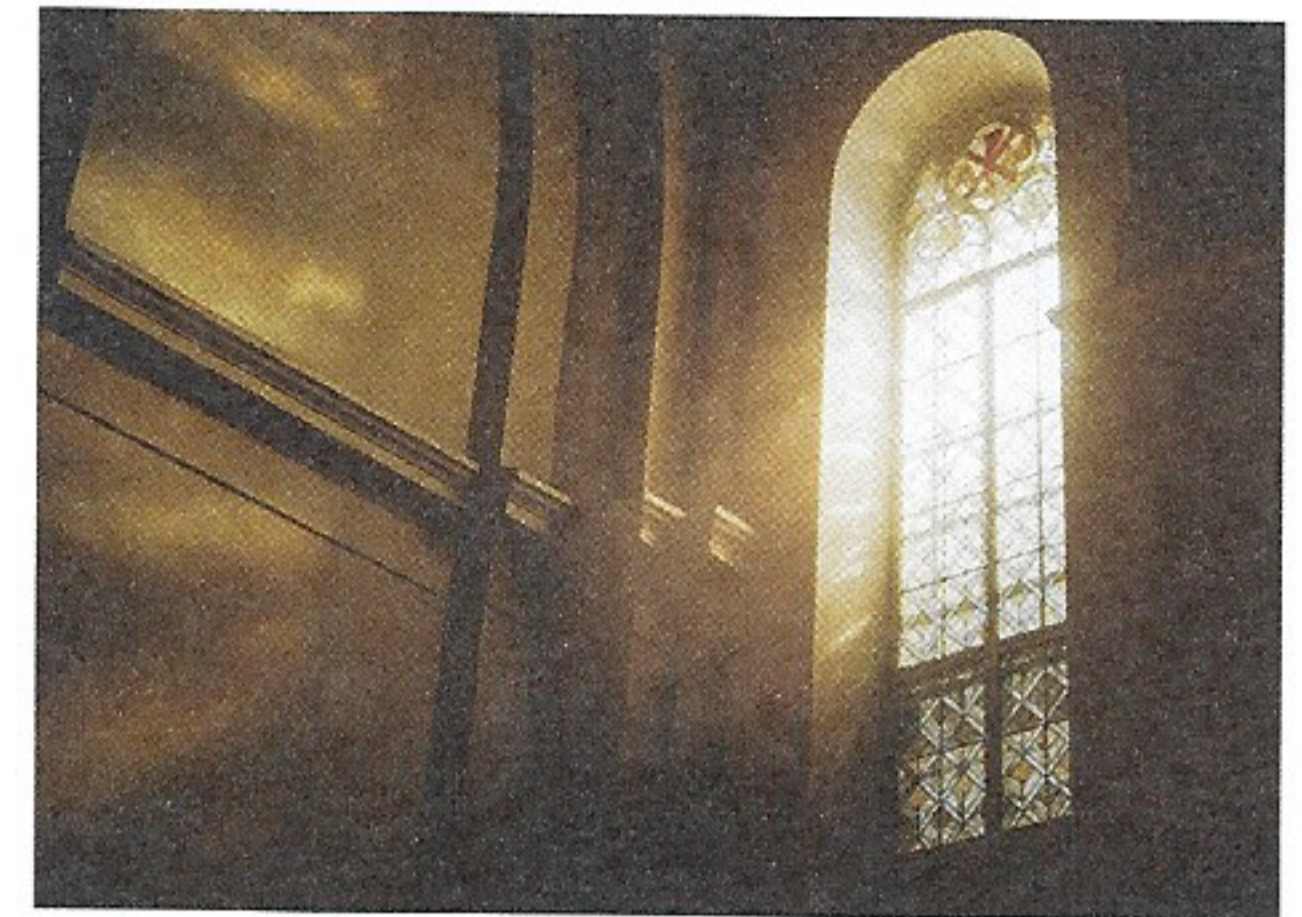
In today's Gospel, Jesus puts a similar direct challenge to his followers. Because of his teaching about the Living Bread, many of his disciples gave up on him and no longer followed him. His teaching was too difficult to live by, too radical, too hard to stomach.

Rejection is always painful. Jesus must have worried that even his closest friends would abandon him too. So he asks the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?"

It's a question Jesus puts directly to each of us also: Do you wish to go away too? Or do you wish to stay? Either way, why? Whatever answer we give will have tremendous implications for us because it will shape the direction of our lives.

After Joshua challenges the Israelites, they give a clear unequivocal answer: "There is no way that we will forsake the Lord to serve other gods. Look at all that God has done for us." And after Jesus challenges the twelve, Simon Peter takes it on himself to give a clear unequivocal answer on behalf of his colleagues: "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."

Today Jesus asks each of us that same question. He is not looking for a half-hearted, equivocal answer. He wants to know up front where each of us stands. ■



PRAY

Pray for those you know who no longer go to church or no longer believe in God. Pray also for those who introduced you to the faith and brought you up in it.

LEARN

Each Christian is called to say a personal "yes" to Jesus.

Following Jesus means having to make hard choices.

DO

We know the statistics. We know that many people have fallen away from the practice of the faith or have given up on the Church entirely, maybe even members of our own families. Today's Gospel offers us an opportunity to think about why we choose to stay when so many others have not. Think of the reasons why your faith is so important to you.

SAY

"Lord, to whom shall I go? You have the message of eternal life."

REFLECT

For many people, what they believe is often second-hand. It's what their parents or grandparents have told them. This is especially true of religion. We are nearly all conscripts, not volunteers. Our religious beliefs and practices were handed down to us like clothes handed down from an older brother or sister. The result is that we may never fully own our faith. We may never answer truthfully for ourselves the two important questions Jesus put to his followers: "Who do you say that I am?" and

the question in today's Gospel, "Do you wish to go away too?"

A second-hand faith will not survive hard times - a crippling illness to ourselves or a loved one, the death of a beloved spouse, a great injustice inflicted by a friend, a cruel betrayal, church scandals. It may not even survive a silly row with a priest.

So it is important that I "own" my faith, that I believe, not because my parents and

teachers taught me to believe and to go to church, but because I personally want to do these things. This kind of faith is not primarily the acceptance of a set of beliefs but a personal commitment to the person of Jesus. It's being able to say with Peter, boldly and with complete conviction: "You are the Holy One of God. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. To whom else could we go?" ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me;
save the servant who trusts in you, my God.
Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all
the day long.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful
to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place
where true gladness is found.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18

A reading from the book of Joshua.

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together
at Shechem; then he called the elders, leaders,
judges and scribes of Israel, and they presented
themselves before God. Then Joshua said to
all the people, "If you will not serve the Lord,
choose today whom you wish to serve, whether
the gods that your ancestors served beyond
the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose
land you are now living. As for me and my
House, we will serve the Lord."

The people answered, "We have no intention
of deserting the Lord and serving other gods!
Was it not the Lord our God who brought us
and our ancestors out of the land of Egypt,
the house of slavery, who worked those great
wonders before our eyes and preserved us all
along the way we travelled and among all the
peoples through whom we journeyed? We too
will serve the Lord, for he is our God."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 33:2-3, 16-23

Response:

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

- I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad. (R.)

- The Lord turns his face against the wicked
to destroy their remembrance from the
earth.
The Lord turns his eyes to the just
and his ears to their appeal. (R.)
- They call and the Lord hears
and rescues them in all their distress.
The Lord is close to the broken-hearted;
those whose spirit is crushed he will save.
(R.)
- Many are the trials of the just man
but from them all the Lord will rescue him.
He will keep guard over all his bones,
not one of his bones shall be broken. (R.)
- Evil brings death to the wicked;
those who hate the good are doomed.
The Lord ransoms the souls of his servants.
Those who hide in him shall not be
condemned. (R.)

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5:21-32

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.

Give way to one another in obedience to Christ.
Wives should regard their husbands as they
regard the Lord, since as Christ is head of
the Church and saves the whole body, so is a
husband the head of his wife; and as the Church
submits to Christ, so should wives to their
husbands, in everything. Husbands should love
their wives just as Christ loved the Church and
sacrificed himself for her to make her holy. He
made her clean by washing her in water with
a form of words, so that when he took her to
himself she would be glorious, with no speck
or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and
faultless. In the same way, husbands must love
their wives as they love their own bodies; for a
man to love his wife is for him to love himself.
A man never hates his own body, but he feeds
it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ
treats the Church, because it is his body – and
we are its living parts. For this reason, a man
must leave his father and mother and be joined
to his wife, and the two will become one body.
This mystery has many implications; but I am
saying it applies to Christ and the Church.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Your words are spirit, Lord,
and they are life;
you have the message of eternal life. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 6:60-69

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

After hearing his doctrine many of the followers
of Jesus said, "This is intolerable language. How
could anyone accept it?" Jesus was aware that
his followers were complaining about it and
said, "Does this upset you? What if you should
see the Son of Man ascend to where he was
before?"

"It is the spirit that gives life,
the flesh has nothing to offer.
The words I have spoken to you are spirit
and they are life.

"But there are some of you who do not
believe." For Jesus knew from the outset those
who did not believe, and who it was that would
betray him. He went on, "This is why I told you
that no one could come to me unless the Father

allows him." After this, many of his disciples left
him and stopped going with him.

Then Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about
you, do you want to go away too?" Simon Peter
answered, "Lord, who shall we go to? You have
the message of eternal life, and we believe; we
know that you are the Holy One of God."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O Lord, who gained for yourself a people by
adoption

through the one sacrifice offered once for all,

bestow graciously on us, we pray,

the gifts of unity and peace in your Church.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The earth is replete with the fruits of your
work, O Lord;

you bring forth bread from the earth
and wine to cheer the heart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray,

the healing work of your mercy

and graciously perfect and sustain us,

so that in all things we may please you.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.