



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

**21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
August 25<sup>th</sup> 2024**

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**Theme: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."**

## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** 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.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: John 6: 60-69**

<sup>60</sup> Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" <sup>61</sup> But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense at this?" <sup>62</sup> Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> But there are some of you that do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. <sup>65</sup> And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

<sup>66</sup> After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. <sup>67</sup> Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; <sup>69</sup> and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God"

## **Gospel Focus**

In this gospel, Jesus' followers make a choice. Faced with teachings they find difficult, many who have followed him turn back, resuming the ordinary lives they lived before they were inspired to follow him. This can be a little disheartening, these are people who were lucky enough to live at the time of Jesus, hear his preaching, and witness his miracles. Surely, his earthly presence with all his compassion and wisdom and power would have stirred a great deal of loyalty. However, many heard his words, followed for a while, and turned back when they encountered something they could not understand. What hope is there for us, who do not have the same privilege of witnessing Jesus' human life? If nothing else, this reading can reassure us that following Jesus is *hard* sometimes. Its rewards are not always immediate or obvious. It takes a choice-in fact, a series of ongoing choices-to stay committed to this life.

## **Gospel Reflection**

The commitment to be bound to another person for life is never made once and for all, it must be renewed again and again. This is true not only of our inter-personnel commitments, like marriage, but also in our commitment to God. At certain moments, we must recommit ourselves rather than simply drift along.

In the first reading, Joshua calls together the tribes of Israel and their leaders. Joshua puts the choice before them: either to serve the Lord who brought them out of Egypt, who performed great miracles before their eyes, and who protected them along the journey; or serve the other gods of the land in which they dwelled. It seems impossible and illogical to make any other choice than to respond wholeheartedly to God, who had begun the relationship with such extraordinary saving acts, Joshua leads the way by declaring that he and his household will serve God alone.

A similar choice is set before the disciples of Jesus in today's gospel. The decision is whether to believe in the One whose words are "Spirit and Life." The setting is the aftermath of Jesus' feeding of the multitude and Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Unlike the first reading, the choice here is not so evident and logical. The disciples say, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" What Jesus asks of them is shocking, as he himself recognizes. It includes a mysterious element of gift that is inexplicable, like the fact that we can never fully or logically explain why we would choose to spend our whole life with another when such a commitment is bound to entail great difficulties. Love and the gracious gift of God are often all we can offer to explain such a choice.

Hard choices must also be made when we face changed circumstances. Sometimes commitments once made have to be reevaluated.

The second reading today invites us to reexamine patterns of relationship that can cause harm rather than fostering greater love. This segment of Ephesians begins by exhorting the mutual subordination of husbands and wives to one another out of reverence for Christ, but then elaborates only one direction of the relationship: the responsibilities of husbands and the subservience of wives to them. It is often used to reinforce male domination over women. Yet the model presented to husbands is that Christ's complete self-sacrificing love for the church. If husbands exercised such self-surrender in love toward their wives, it would result in dismantling of structures of male domination and would initiate a whole new pattern of mutual respect and self-giving love.

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18**

<sup>1</sup> Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. <sup>2</sup> And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. ...

<sup>15</sup> And if you be unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

<sup>16</sup> Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup> for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; <sup>18</sup> and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land; therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

## **Responsorial Psalm—Ps 34:2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21**

***Response: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.***

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the Lord; the lowly will hear me and be glad **(R)**

The Lord has eyes for the just, and ears for their cry. The Lord confronts the evildoers, to destroy remembrance of them from the earth. **(R)**

When the just cry out, the Lord hears them, and from all their distress he rescues them. The Lord is close to the broken hearted; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves. **(R)**

Many are the troubles of the just one, but out of them all the Lord delivers him; he watches over all his bones; not one of them shall be broken. **(R)**

## **Second Reading — Ephesians 5:21-32**

<sup>21</sup> Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

<sup>24</sup> As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

<sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church.

## **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**440.** – Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man. (Cf. Mt 16:16-23) He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man "who came down from heaven", and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Jn 3:13; Mt 20:28; cf. Jn 6:62; Dan 7:13; Isa 53:10-12) Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross. (Cf. Jn 19:19-22; Lk 23:39-43.) Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36.)

**473.** But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of his person. (Cf. St. Gregory the Great, "Sicut aqua" ad Eulogium, Epist. Lib. 10, 39 PL 77, 1097 Aff.; DS 475) "The human nature of God's Son, *not by itself but by its union with the Word*, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to

God."(St. Maximus the Confessor, Qu. et dub. 66 PG 90, 840A) Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father.(Cf. Mk 14:36; Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18; 8:55; etc.) The Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts.(Cf. Mk 2:8; Jn 2 25; 6:61; etc.)

**1336.** The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them: "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"(Jn 6:60) The Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks. It is the same mystery and it never ceases to be an occasion of division. "Will you also go away?"(Jn 6:67) the Lord's question echoes through the ages, as a loving invitation to discover that only he has "the words of eternal life"(Jn 6:68) and that to receive in faith the gift of his Eucharist is to receive the Lord himself.

**2766.** But Jesus does not give us a formula to repeat mechanically.(Cf. Mt 6:7; 1 Kings 18:26-29) As in every vocal prayer, it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God to pray to their Father. Jesus not only gives us the words of our filial prayer; at the same time he gives us the Spirit by whom these words become in us "spirit and life."(Jn 6:63) Even more, the proof and possibility of our filial prayer is that the Father "sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"(Gal 4:6) Since our prayer sets forth our desires before God, it is again the Father, "he who searches the hearts of men," who "knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."(Rom 8:27) The prayer to Our Father is inserted into the mysterious mission of the Son and of the Spirit.

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. "This is a hard saying; who can accept it?" Is it a struggle for you to accept the fact that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist?
2. Have you ever experienced a time when you questioned your faith or felt distant from God? How did you navigate through that period?
3. What are some current challenges in your faith journey? Where and how do you seek support or encouragement to face these challenges?

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Creator God, you breathed new life into the world through the sending of your Son and Spirit. Receive our prayers that we might be drawn out into the world to share your love with everyone we meet. We ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen

**Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via via Zoom will be resuming on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2024 – All are welcome!**

**Every Wednesday**

**Time: 8 – 9.30 pm**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>**

**Meeting ID: 276 007 3734**

**Passcode: 1WordOfGod**

**All are welcome!**

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**References:**

- (1) Gospel Notes are taken from The Navarre Bible
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