

TRINITY 12/ORD 21- 2021

Josh 24:1-2; 15-18

Eph 5:21-32

Jn 6:60-69

The French author Jules Renard said, "Liberty is the right to choose. Freedom is the result of right choices." Today's readings are about choices. Joshua was about to die so he gathered God's people together so he could remind them that they could choose to worship God who brought them out of Egypt or choose to worship the pagan gods of other nations. The choice they make will indicate who they trusted.

The gospel reading is about choosing to trust Jesus or not. Jesus had been teaching the people that he is the life-giving bread from heaven which is the food of the age to come. The eternal life of the Kingdom of God can be lived in the here and now through faith in Jesus and through the sacraments. Jesus said, "everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:40). He also said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him" (Jn 6:56). Jesus is emphasising the closeness of the relationship between himself and those who trust him and receive him through the sacrament of the mass. St Paul describes this close relationship in today's second reading as that of a bride and groom.

The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus is true God and true Man and that he was born on earth to nourish us with God's truth through his teaching, miracles, death and resurrection and feed us with the Blessed Sacrament which is an extension of his life on earth. The Incarnate Jesus and the Blessed Sacrament are inextricably linked.

St John's gospel recalls the description in the Book of Chronicles of King David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Within the Ark was kept the original stone tablets of the Ten Commandments – the teachings of God. There was also a bowl of the miraculous Manna, the bread from heaven that had sustained the Israelites in the wilderness. For St John, the eucharist or mass is not simply meal which is a symbol or a reminder of Jesus' death when the faithful remember that Jesus told us to love each other in the way he had loved us. Neither is it a shared meal with the bread and wine acting as a sign of the Risen Christ as we wait for his return at the Final Judgment. St John wants us to understand the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist as an extension of the Incarnate Jesus. Jesus on earth and the Sacramental Body and Blood of Jesus are one. They cannot be separated.

This teaching was too hard for some of those who heard them they understood what Jesus said about eating his flesh and blood as cannibalism. Others perhaps had difficulty accepting that Jesus had come from the Father and was indeed God's Chosen One, so they walked away. When Jesus asked his Apostles if they would walk away, Peter responded by saying they had nowhere to go because Jesus possessed the words of life and was the Holy One of God. This is John's gospel equivalent of Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi. Right from the beginning, Jesus' disciples have struggled with the issues of who Jesus really is and whether or not the Blessed Sacrament is really him even though he said so during the Last Supper.

These struggles continue today among those who describe themselves as disciples of Jesus. Some do not consider Jesus to be the divine Son of God but simply a human teacher and prophet.

Others do not believe that the blessed Sacrament is the body and blood of Christ but a symbol of them. This is not Catholic belief. Catholic teaching is that in our worship at mass we are nourished through the Scriptures and strengthened by Jesus who abides in us and we in him when we receive his sacred Body & Blood and worship him in prayerful Adoration before the Sacrament. The Mass is like the content of the Ark. It carries the sword of God in the Scriptures and the Incarnate Word of God who is the Bread of Life for the faithful.

Making the right choices brings us the freedom of living in God's Kingdom.

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August 2021