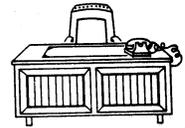


21st Sunday in Ordinary Time August 26, 2018



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

A quote from Joshua's address in the first reading gives us something to reflect on. He states:

"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 dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua was getting older and weak. He was unsure when death would come knocking. At this point, the Israelites had taken possession of the Promised Land after the Lord cleared the way for them. With the long journey from Egypt behind them, and the land apportioned to the various tribes of Israel, there was a tendency to let down their guard. Joshua reminded the Israelites of all that God did for them, and left it up to them to choose which god to follow. If they mean to follow the God who led them out of the land of slavery, they would have to keep his commandments. He also made clear they understood where he and his family stood, stating, *"As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."*

Fortunately, the people's memory was still alive – they had not forgotten the God who saved them and fought their battles. Hence, they replied, *"Far be it from us to forsake the LORD for the service of other gods ... Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."* This is a beautiful reaffirmation of faith in God. How tragic it would have been if the Israelites had chosen to follow other gods instead. They trusted the wisdom of their fathers in choosing and following the God of Israel.

We also find a similar dynamic working in the gospel passage. For the last five weeks, we have been reading about the *Bread of Life* motif in chapter six of John's gospel. These readings came to a climax last Sunday with Jesus stating, *"... and the bread I will is my flesh for the life of the world... Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you."* The people thought he had gone crazy. It seemed like his camp was beginning to fracture. The crowd was no longer the only ones murmuring, his own followers were beginning to murmur. Sensing their discomfort, Jesus asked, *"Does this shock you?"* Of course, the teaching was shocking and many of his disappointed followers were returning to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.

It was a critical moment in Jesus' ministry when his followers were compelled to make a choice to either follow or walk away. Faced with the growing rebellion around him, Jesus turned to the twelve apostles and asked, *"Do you also want to leave?"* Speaking for the Apostles, Peter stated, *"Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life..."* Peter's response must have been reassuring to Jesus. You can say all you want about Peter's weaknesses, but this was one of his greatest moments. His unequivocal statements of faith set him apart.

Choosing to follow God is a personal decision we have to make. Some argue that the choice was made for them when they were infants and had no say in the matter. However, as we grow older, we develop the capacity to choose a different path or reinforce the choices made on our behalf when we were infants. Choosing to follow God involves a lifelong commitment of faith and trust. Karl Rahner, one of the greatest theologians of our time, called it a "fundamental option." This is not like choosing between chocolate and vanilla ice cream. It is a choice that determines the trajectory of the rest of your life. Some choose to walk away when the going got tough. That you are in church today is evidence of your choice to stay with Jesus. You have chosen wisely and God will commend you.

Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus