

Twenty-first Sunday of Ordinary: The Words of Eternal Life

They left him in droves. Five thousand had been fed by Him. How many hundreds or even thousands crossed the Sea of Galilee to see Him again, and to receive more bread? But when they heard Jesus speak about His flesh as real food, when they heard Him say that they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood, they left. This teaching was too hard for them to accept.

Jesus was not about to tone down the teaching. He was not about to make it more palatable. The teaching had to be accepted by those who wished to follow Him. So, many of them left.

“Are you going too?” the Lord asked.

Peter replied in a great confession of faith, “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

People have always been tempted to compromise on the hard truths of the faith. Some have turned Jesus into a great man, but not divine. Others have said that He was divine, but did not really exist as a man, He just appeared that way. The truth of the Incarnation, of Jesus being both human and divine was too hard for them to accept, so they compromised and said he was one or the other, but not both.

They wanted to do the same thing regarding the teaching on the Bread of Life. They wanted to call it symbolic, but not real. They ignored Jesus’ teaching. Or they left Him. In droves.

Faith demands continual decisions to take steps beyond our minds’ ability into the vast richness of Divine revelation. Faith demands the humility to accept that we cannot understand all that is revealed. Faith demands that we set our minds free from the shackles of physical knowledge and take leaps into the wisdom of God. Faith means opening ourselves up to eternal life.

To whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life.

It is sad that throughout history many people have rejected the One who has the words of eternal life and have instead given themselves over to a blind following of those who can offer them no more than a political view of life. Demagogues appear everywhere and at every time. Many people are willing to drink the Kool-Aid of multiple Jonestowns and destroy themselves to follow someone who cannot give them anything more than a sense of being a part of an idolizing crowd. So they said, “Hail Caesar,” and sacrificed the Roman Republic. They said, “Heil Hitler,” and sacrificed their morality.

Many people become caught up with an individual, What do they get for their

blind faith? Nothing. Human beings cannot offer anything beyond a hope for a change in the world around them. This change may be beneficial for a time, but it does not last. The change will not have an eternal effect upon those who follow them.

Only Jesus Christ has the words of eternal life.

We are called to stand apart from those elements of society that ignores, or even worse, rejects the Words of Eternal life. We are called to reject those who make noises as though they are the enlightened majority. They are neither, neither enlightened nor a majority. The so-called intelligentsia who see good in every evil, in every perversity, are foolish. They have demanded a society where all morality is subjected to the glorification of the individual. Their only morality is relativism. They admit to no restrictions regarding right or wrong. Everything depends on the person's desires. "That which is right for one person can certainly be wrong for another," they would assert. For them there are no values such as fidelity, honesty, and basic respect. Everything is relative. As a result they really cannot have a society. The enlightened intellectuals of this ilk are basically foolish.

And they ask us to join them. Worse, they demand that we join them. The choice is clear for us. Do we go along with what supposedly everyone is saying is now acceptable, or at least now acceptable for us, or do we choose the way of the Lord? Like Joshua in today's first reading, we have to hold on tight and declare, "As for me and my family, we will follow the Lord."

It takes tremendous strength to withstand the pressures around us. Where are we to get this strength? "*Our strength is in the Lord who made heaven and earth.*" *Psalm 121:2*. God gave us the Eucharist, the very Body and Blood of His Son. In the Eucharist, Jesus gives us the power to withstand the onslaught of the world. We pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." And He does. He gives us the strength we need. He gives us the Bread of Life.

The Eucharist gives us the strength to be authentic, true, real Christians, authentic, true, real Catholics. It is Jesus Christ who is calling us to a living, a vital faith. If we refuse to follow Him, where exactly can we go? Whom can we follow? Who else has the words of eternal life? We are convinced that Jesus is the Holy One of God. We have no choice. Eternal Life can only be found in Him.

The conclusion of *John 6* is far more than a call to believe in the Eucharist. It is this, but it is more. It is a call to trust in the Lord. It is a call to dare to be different from those who have left him and who give lip service to their Christianity. We are called to be different. We are called to be holy, for, after all, that is what holiness is, being separate for the Lord.

We have a choice.....Or do we? No, we really do not have a choice. Where else can we go? He alone has the words of eternal life.

