



21st Sunday IN ORDINARY TIME

Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.” - Jn 6:68

Our Lady of Peace Church Sunday, August 22, 2021

FROM THE DESK OF FR. STAN

My dear friends,

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

After the special celebration in honor of Mary's Assumption last weekend, our readings once again return our focus to the Eucharist, asking us to consider how God feeds us. We are also reminded on this Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time that our relationship with God is based on freedom and love. God wants us to relate as free persons, not as robots, and not out of fear.

Our first reading, Joshua 24:1-2a, 17, 18b, brings us to a transition period in the history of Israel. Moses, who helped to secure the people's freedom from bondage in Egypt, and who led them for forty years through the desert, has come to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. One of his lieutenants, Joshua, is now the leader for the new generation, whose task it will be to actually enter and occupy the Promised Land. As in many cases when there is a significant change in leadership, Joshua calls for a free acceptance of a renewed covenant in which the people will serve the one true God, and will also pledge their fortunes to each other. Note that the people are treated as mature adults. The decision to continue or not will be theirs.

"Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, summoning their elders, their leaders, their judges and their officers. When they stood in ranks before God, Joshua addressed all the people: "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 now dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." This final line has become very meaningful and is used quite often at revival meetings and in worship assemblies; it has also found its way into song.

The response of the people is immediate. "But the people answered, 'Far be it from us to forsake the Lord for the service of other gods. For it was the Lord, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery. He performed those great miracles before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among the people through whom we passed. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.'"

Note that the response is immediate. It is rooted in the extraordinary experiences that the people of the Exodus have shared. However, a closer look at the actual account of the time spent in the desert shows that there were many fits and starts. The people were easily dissatisfied. They quickly became impatient. When the going became rough, there were even times when they wanted to return to Egypt, where at least they had food. So, then as now, the relationship with God is mediated through life experience. On good days, when we have our health and things are generally going our way, it is easier to believe. The real test is in the challenging times, when life is a struggle, and it is hard to see the way forward. Then it becomes easy to cash in one's faith for a quick fix or easy solution. Rather than waiting patiently to discover God working in the challenges, many find it easier to bail out.

Our gospel reading, John 6:60-69, continues the Bread of Life discourse. Jesus has told the people, "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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him/her on the last day. For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." Thus, Jesus offers God's nourishment to help us to persevere in faith. By focusing on God's Word in Scripture and receiving Jesus' very being, we are given assistance to help us when the path is hard and we feel we can no longer go on.

In today's segment of the discourse, we learn that many people found this teaching difficult to accept. "Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said, 'This saying is hard; who can accept it?' Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this he said to them, "Does this shock you?" Then, even though Jesus knows that his words are difficult for many to accept, he does not retreat. As a matter of fact, he brings the discussion in a point-blank way to those closest to him, the Twelve Apostles. He asks them what I think is the saddest question in all of Scripture: "Do you also want to leave?"

Jesus is asking his followers to choose, just as Joshua had done centuries before. True faith is always a free commitment involving trust. Often, reason fails to understand. The human mind is simply too limited to grasp fully the mysteries of the encounter with God. Jesus himself had such a moment on the cross, asking why the Father had abandoned him to his fate. Yet, he continued on, choosing the path laid out for him, following through on his promise during the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but yours, be done." And so, when Jesus asks the Twelve what they will do, Simon Peter answers on their behalf. "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God." Again, the commitment has to be free.



Saturday, August 21-Rosary at 3:15P

4:00P *Helen Podlesny*
by the Hersey family

Sunday, August 22

8:00A *Anne Gates*
by her family
10:00A *Sandy Weller*
by Ed & Carol Brennan

Saturday, August 28-Rosary at 3:15P

4:00P *Michael & Helen Milewski*
by Cindy

Sunday, August 29

8:00A *Carolyn Morahan*
by Harry & Margaret Gove
10:00A *Genevieve Guy*
by the parish staff

DAILY MASS

Monday, August 23

8:00A *Eva Milenz*
by Marcia Caloon

Tuesday, August 24

8:00A *Deceased members of the Boucher family*
by Louise Boucher Croll

Wednesday, August 25

8:00A *Sandy Weller*
by John Caloon

Thursday, August 26

8:00A *Myncha Skowron* 4th anniversary
by Sue Hastings

Friday, August 27

8:00A *Holy Communion Service*

Our Lady's Window
August 22 *Charles Miner*
by the Senior Choir

ANNUAL BLUE MASS to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of 9-11 will be Sunday, **September 12**, 10:00A in St. Michael's Cathedral, 260 State Street, Springfield. Families are invited to attend and the Mass will also be televised live on "Chalice of Salvation," on WWLP-Channel 22.

MASS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS Bishop William D. Byrne will celebrate a Mass for essential workers at the Forest Park amphitheater, adjacent to the Barney Estate, Springfield, Sunday, **September 5** at 10:00A. The Mass will be broadcast live on WWLP-Channel22, and will recognize and lift up in prayer healthcare workers, first responders, employees of grocery stores, gas stations and other businesses considered essential during the state of emergency. Please bring your own chairs or blankets for seating.



Support Montague Catholic Social Ministries
Our parish donations of non-perishable food and goods will now be given to stock the food pantry at MCSM and help the many families in need in our community.



COMING SOON!

In cooperation with Walgreens, we will be sponsoring a free drive-thru flu clinic on Wednesday, **October 6** from 9:00-11:30A in our parking lot. Watch the bulletin for more details regarding sign-ups. Have questions? Call

Marguerite 863.2585 ext. 103.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH in Shelburne Falls will hold an outdoor "Giant Tag Sale" on Saturday, **August 28** from 8:00A-2:00P and Sunday, **August 29** from 9:00A-12Noon. Don't miss quality items. Furniture, tea cup auction, jewelry, books and more. And gift cards to local stores and restaurant. Call 625.6405 for more information.

LOOKING AHEAD! The Annual Women's Group Mass will be Sunday, **September 5** at 10:00A. The next meeting will be Tuesday, **September 7** at 6:00P.



Inquiry sessions will begin in early September. There is no pressure or commitment. If you wish more information, call Marguerite 863.2585 ext. 103

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM will begin **October 3**. Registration and calendars will be sent home in mid-August. For information, call Carol 863-4015.

PARISH COLLECTIONS

Weekend of August 15
Regular \$2,935.00
On-line \$1,174.00

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