

Homily. 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. B. 21/22 August 2021.

I don't come from a wealthy family. At the Ice Cream parlour it was either strawberry, chocolate, caramel or vanilla, just one scoop, not all of them or some combination of flavours. One of the better lessons I learnt from this is that you can't have everything you want. We do have choices but they are limited by circumstances and reality. Another lesson I learnt is that once you've made your choice then you're stuck with it because opportunities to make these choices are limited by reality, too.

Having finally entered and taken the promised land as their own, Joshua gathered the leaders of the people and put a choice to them; Choose to serve the God who had freed and cared for them, or go back to their old ways and former god's. Sticking his neck out even further, Joshua declared that he and his family would serve the liberating and saving God. Now it was up to the others who lead their family and tribal groups to choose between the future or the past. Thankfully, they chose to serve the Lord, for as they said, He was their one and only God.

Concluding His teaching on the Bread of Life a similar situation arose by the Sea of Galilee, as told to us through St. John's gospel. Having fed the multitude from the small boy's offering of 5 barley loaves and 2 dried fish, Jesus had taught the crowd and their leaders that they did have work to do. Theirs was the work of choosing to believe in Him and committing their lives to Him for He was God's Living Bread from Heaven sent to give true and lasting nourishment and life to the world.

Further more, Jesus explained to them that they needed to eat and drink His own body and blood so that He could satisfy all of their deepest

hungers and quench their constant thirst. If they chose to work at believing in Him then their communion with Him in His flesh and blood was their way to be satisfied, becoming Him in service of God and others.

As John's gospel reveals, the requirement of constantly working at believing in Jesus sounded far too hard, their sharing in His life, mission and fate by taking Him into themselves simply too appalling. They people said their No, and having made their choice many left Jesus company returning to their former ways. Seeing this desertion, Jesus like Joshua before Him, stuck His neck out further saying to the Twelve; What about you, do you want to go away too? This time getting things right, something never guaranteed when it came to Peter, he stepped out and spoke up saying truthfully they had no where else to go and no one else to turn to, for Jesus had the message of eternal life and they believed.

Rarely has the ongoing work of believing, of having faith in someone greater and better than ourselves been more important than it is today. Still, Jesus is offering this choice to each and all of us, making Himself vulnerable and putting His neck on the line for our sake. He takes this risk so that we can freely choose the Holy One of God, or if we want, opt for our former ways and worn out beliefs in these troubled, changing times.

By being members of our faith community and in coming to the Lord's table to receive and take Him into ourselves we're making a serious choice for one thing, one way of living and one person, rejecting all others. We're saying our solemn Amen, our sincere yes to Jesus way, Spirit and Life. May we never forget the choice we're making as we try,

with the Lord's help, to become what we see and in our daily lives to be what we make our own, the Bread of life and the Cup of eternal salvation.