



August 26, 2012

Twenty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time

Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you want to leave me too?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life." John 6:67-68

Dear Friends;

To whom are you loyal? Is there something or someone for whom you stand no matter what? For what would you be willing to die? Who comes first—self-interest, ideology, family, God, country, political party, Jesus, the Gospel? Today's Gospel invites us to ask where Jesus fits in our hierarchy of values, is he first or somewhere down the line?

Some years ago I was being interviewed for a phone survey about political issues. At the end the interviewer asked with what political party do I identify? I responded Catholic. She was taken aback. I then went onto explain that my faith is the overriding attitude that guides me when deciding upon political issues. Neither party represents adequately for me the justice of the reign of God. So I do not identify fully with any political party. She understood and probably categorized me as neither.

The first reading today from the Book of Joshua invites us to consider our loyalty to our Covenant with God. Will you serve the many other gods of our past—self, nationalism, patriarchy, social Darwinism, pleasure, convenience, institutional religion etc.? Or do we choose the Living God who calls us to be a people of justice and bound together in love for the common good?

Even though the second reading from the letter to the Ephesians can be problematic, at the heart of it is our reverence and loyalty to Christ demands our reverence and loyalty to each other in love. We must put others first. This is a challenge when society tells us to always put first our self.

For the last several weeks Jesus has been nourishing us with the bread of his teaching from John's Gospel. The image of Jesus as bread of life demands of us an intimacy and loyalty to him that supersedes all other loyalties no matter how good. This means that we are going to have to surrender many of our priorities and make Jesus and the Gospel number one.

Many could not take these demands their divided loyalties led them to walk away. When we are face with the decision will we be loyal to Jesus or something else? It is only grace that can give us the strength to stick with Jesus.

There is a story from World War II. The Nazis had come into a town and killed the Jews they could round up. They buried them in a mass grave. One twelve year old boy was still alive and able to dig his way out of the shallow grave. He went in around the town seeking shelter in homes. The townspeople knew what had happened to the Jews and when they saw the boy caked in dirt, they hurriedly slammed the door in his face. One woman was about to do the same when the boy said, "Lady, don't you recognize me? I'm the Jesus you Christians say you love." The woman broke down into tears and received the boy into her home. She made her decision for Jesus.

May the Spirit of the Living God give us faith, loyalty, commitment and solidarity in Jesus! May we too serve the Lord all the days of our life!

Peace,

Fr. Ron