

Ordinary 21B 2015

Time to Decide

There are moments when all of us must make a life-changing decision. We can think about the decision. We can weigh its pros and cons. We can discuss it with others. We can even delay it, postpone it, and make believe we really don't have to decide. But sooner or later we must decide because there are some decisions—life-changing decisions—that we must make, whether we want to or not. And what we decide, and when we decide, and how decide, makes all the difference.

When the people of Israel stood at the edge of the Promised Land, after the Lord had recused them from Egypt, Joshua presented them with just such a decision: “If it pleases you to serve the Lord, decide today whom you will serve ... as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” The decision that the people made that day made all the difference. Those, like Joshua who decided to serve the Lord became God's people, whereas those who chose to serve others gods did not.

Something similar happens in today's gospel. The crowd listened to Jesus as he told them that he is the bread of life, but for most of them this claim was too much: “This saying is hard,” they said, “who can accept it?” And from that time on, many of Jesus' disciples left him and no longer followed him. But instead of softening his words, Jesus turned to his few remaining disciples and asked them,

“Do you also want to leave?” It was at this critical moment that Peter and the remaining disciples made their life-changing decision: “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

For the past five weeks, we have also been listening to Jesus’ life-giving words about the bread of life. And now the moment of decision has come for us as well. Will we believe that he is the bread of life that has come down from heaven for the life of the world? Do we believe that we truly encounter the crucified and risen Christ in the Eucharist we receive each week? The answer we give to this question is life-changing. For, if we firmly believe that Jesus is the bread of life, then he is the source and center of our life, the one who changes and transforms our life; he is the one who leads us into the mystery of God. And if we receive the Eucharist with the firm faith that it is truly the body and blood of the crucified and risen Lord, then we are sealed and destined for eternal life.

But this is the kind of decision that only you can make for yourself. No one can make it for you. No one can take your place. This is a decision that is life-changing because it has the power to bring you into an entirely new relationship with God and Jesus Christ, an entirely new relationship with all who receive the Eucharist with faith and believe in Jesus Christ. Yes, this is a decision that only you can make, a decision you must make sooner or later.