

Readings: *Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18, Ephesians 6:10-20, John 6:56-69, Psalm 34:15-22*

Theme: *Commitment to God and his Church*

"The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you, there are some who do not believe."

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

My dear friends, today, we reflect on the nature of our commitment to God and his church. The above quotation is from the answer Jesus gave to his disciples when some of his followers found what he was saying difficult to understand. Those who were not committed fell on the way side and those willing to make the commitment continued to follow him. Yes, for some it was a speech too far. Who can accept this? Looking at the readings today we might understand what Jesus Christ is saying to his followers.

Joshua, in the first reading, was seeking commitment from the people of Israel. When they had taken possession of Canaan, Joshua assembles all the tribes of Israel at Shechem for a covenant renewal ceremony. This was an opportunity for them to rededicate themselves to the covenant that they made with Yahweh at Mount Sinai. When Joshua had put the case across and committed his whole family to the service of Yahweh, the people of Israel did likewise - thus opening the door for constant renewal of the Covenant.'

Paul in the second reading urges the Ephesians to renew their comggggitment to God. He implores them to stand strong and in faith. He reminds them that their fight is not with flesh and blood but with the spirit. To achieve victory, the battle has to be fought with an amour of truth and righteousness. And above all they should pray always.

The Gospel is about the message of Jesus. As soon as they heard his teaching about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Many thought he had gone mad and so stopped following him. This was really a decision time for the disciples who were equally worried about such sayings. Upon hearing his teaching on bread of life, there is a major rift in the ranks of the disciples. Up to that moment many of them who had found him a captivating preacher, watched him

cure the sick, restored sight to the blind and witnessed the miraculous feeding of the five thousand now turned their backs and walked away. They found his words deeply upsetting and a severe challenge to their faith. His teaching confronted them with a 'take it' or 'leave it' scenario. The moment of truth had arrived and there was no changing of his language or watering down of his message. Of course, there was no pleading to the people to come back. People were faced with a choice to stay or join the rank of unbelievers. Unable to take it, many departed.

My dear friends, there is nothing new in Christ's word being rejected, as they have been rejected ever since they were first spoken. People choose to walk away for various reasons. The murmuring can be over the changes in the church, authorisation of the clergy, rules about marriage, change of liturgy and so on.

Left alone with the twelve apostles, Jesus calls on them for a personal commitment and challenges them to follow him in the in his deep quest for truth. 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Jesus asks. On behalf of the apostles, Peter responds with a profession of faith. 'We believe, we know that you are the holy one of God.'

The question Jesus posed to the apostles strikes a chord to all us. There are many times in life when our faith is challenged. While we are tempted to wander off, cut our ties and walk a different pathway, somehow we realise there is nowhere else to go. At those moments when our faith is challenged or when some storm threatens to destroy us, we must not fix our attention on our problems but on the person of Christ, because he has promised us that his commitment is not to allow us to sink.

Let us reflect on this promise and recognise him as our Anchor, which is sure to hold in the storms of life.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen