

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Jn 6:63, 68

Alleluia, alleluia!

Your words, Lord, are spirit and life:
you have the words of everlasting life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 6:60-69

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Lord, whom shall we go to? You have the words of everlasting life.

After hearing his doctrine many of the followers of Jesus said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this upset you? What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?'

'It is the spirit that gives life,
the flesh has nothing to offer.

The words I have spoken to you are spirit
and they are life.

'But there are some of you who do not believe.'

For Jesus knew from the outset those who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. He went on, 'This is why I told you that no one could come to me unless the Father allows him.' After this, many of his disciples left him and stopped going with him.

Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, whom shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / B

22 AUGUST 2021

MAKING DECISIONS

In the lives of us all there are moments when we have to make decisions – decisions which will radically shape our future. When Joshua gathered all the people of Israel to the shrine of Shechem it was a moment of decision. Having finally taken possession of their own land, the risk was that they would be assimilated into the religious culture of the people that surrounded them. An even greater danger was that of forgetting the God who had made all this possible. Joshua saw that the time had come for the people of Israel to choose.

In a similar fashion, as Jesus concludes the bread of life discourse, his disciples and his contemporaries are challenged to decide where their allegiance lies. While Jesus' words are a scandal for even some of the disciples, the Twelve, through Peter, decide that Jesus' message is truly life-giving and that it comes from God.

The decision which is envisaged in the second reading is that married couples decide to model their relationship on the love that Jesus has shown in giving up his life for us all. The regulation of relationships in households found here is clearly coloured by its first century context and its language of submission can give the modern reader a jolt. Despite this there are reciprocal demands made on both spouses to model their love on that of Jesus who gave his life for us all.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Josh 24:1-2, 15-18

A reading from the book of Joshua.

We will serve the Lord God, because he is our God.

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together at Shechem; then he called the elders, leaders, judges and scribes of Israel, and they presented themselves before God. Then Joshua said to all the people: 'If you will not serve the Lord, choose today whom you wish to serve, whether the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are now living. As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.'

The people answered, 'We have no intention of deserting the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors out of the land of Egypt, the house of slavery, who worked those great wonders before our eyes and preserved us all along the way we travelled and among all the peoples through whom we journeyed. We too will serve the Lord, for he is our God.'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 33:2-3, 16-23. R. v. 9

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

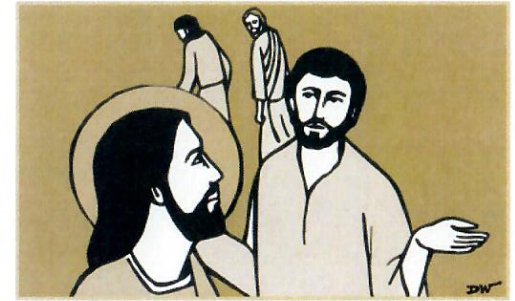
1. I will bless the Lord at all times, / his praise always on my lips; / in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. / The humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**

2. The Lord turns his face against the wicked / to destroy their remembrance from the earth. / The Lord turns his eyes to the just / and his ears to their appeal. **R.**

3. They call and the Lord hears / and rescues them in all their distress. / The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; / those whose spirit is crushed he will save. **R.**

4. Many are the trials of the just man / but from them all the Lord will rescue him. / He will keep guard over all his bones, / not one of his bones shall be broken. **R.**

5. Evil brings death to the wicked; / those who hate the good are doomed. / The Lord



ransoms the souls of his servants. / Those who hide in him shall not be condemned. **R.**

SECOND READING

Eph 5:21-32

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

This is the great mystery, it applies to Christ and the Church.

Give way to one another in obedience to Christ. Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord, since as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife; and as the Church submits to Christ, so should wives to their husbands, in everything. Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy. He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because it is his body – and we are its living parts. For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one body. This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.

■ The word of the Lord.