

REFLECTION FOR 21st SUNDAY YEAR B

Joshua 24:1-2,15-18 Ephesians 5:21-32 John 6:60-69

Over the last 18 months we have been watching on the news how hospitals around the world are struggling to cope with large number of people affected with covid.

I remember watching the news a few months ago on BBC and a nurse saying, "I don't know if I can do this anymore. It is too much for me. I just can't cope." And yet somehow this person continued to cope.

Medical systems around the world have been overwhelmed to such an extent that we look upon health professionals as heroes because in the midst of all these things they have found the strength to continue in their work in a way that, I am sure when they look back on it one day, they won't understand how they were able to do it. They won't understand why they continued and yet they did, and they still continue to work to save lives.

For the past four weekends we have been reading from Chapter 6 of John's Gospel. Today, we have the final reading from Chapter 6 of John's Gospel.

Throughout Chapter 6 of John's Gospel, we hear this important affirmation: Jesus says "I am the Bread of Life", "I am the Living Bread which has come down from Heaven", "Anyone who eats this Bread will live forever", "If you do not eat my Flesh and drink my Blood you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my Flesh and drink my Blood has eternal life".

After hearing Jesus' teaching, many of his followers said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' Many of His disciples left Him and stopped going with Him.

Then Jesus said to the apostles, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life'

Why do you keep coming back to the church? Why are you watching this Mass online? Why do people continue to believe in God? Why do people continue to believe in others and in each other? Why do you continue to persevere?

Because like the apostles who didn't drop off but who persevered, like the health professionals I talked about earlier who have every reason not to continue to risk their lives yet continue to risk their lives to save lives; when we look back over our lives and see how many times God has blessed us, healed us, delivered us, strengthened us, we can't help but say we choose to serve God and humanity.

And somehow, we have found the possibility and the grace to continue to believe in God, to continue to believe in each other, to continue to believe in life.

That is what we mean by our "Amen" while receiving Jesus in Holy Communion. We express without any conditions or reservations our total commitment to Jesus.

The Response for today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 34), encourages perseverance to the end, when we shall eventually "taste" (fully realize through personal experience), and "see" (everything, past, present, and future, falling into place), "the Goodness of the Lord!"

This is the work of the Holy Spirit that makes this possible. It is the spirit that gives life, Jesus says the flesh has nothing to offer. 'The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life'

Jesus says, 'This is why I told you that no one could come to me unless the Father allows you' No one can believe, no one can find their place except that this is the work of God already present in you.

Christ's thoughts, attitudes, values, and life-view must become totally ours. Above all, we are to identify with Jesus in the offering of His Flesh and the pouring out of His Blood on the Cross by spending our lives for others.

With a steadfast faith, may we stand with Christ to say: *"Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life and we believe...You are the Holy One of God."* Or, like Joshua, say: *"As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord all the days of our life."*

Fr Patrick