

**22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B**  
**September 3, 2006**

---

Sometimes we view Scripture through our own experience some 2000 years later and miss the point. Our point of view and sometimes a lack of historical perspective keep us from clarity.

Today's Gospel is by Mark and follows 4 weeks of John's Gospel, called the "Bread of Life Discourse."

John is about the theology of Eucharist; partaking and being nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, not just 2000 years AGO, BUT right here today at this Mass, at this Eucharistic celebration.

The First episode of the story is the loaves and fishes story where 5000 people are fed by the multiplication of loaves and fishes.

As fitting all miracle stories, a lesson is coupled with this multiplication of loaves and fishes story. It is that eating the body and blood of Christ brings wisdom as we abide and partake in Christ. But equally important is that Jesus is admonishing the listeners to **MAKE NEW CHOICES**. To change their lives to follow HIM, teaching **Love, Truth, and Mercy**; to turn away from the practices of this World. Today's reading in Mark puts the **EMPHASIS** on this idea of making Choices, our second reading asks are you a "doer" or just a "hearer"?

Many of the 5000 started asking for signs as in the context of Jewish historical tradition that Moses gave them manna from heaven in the desert as a sign from God. However, Jesus was not obliging them in the way they expected.

Our next part of the Gospel of John is Jesus walking on water, but Jesus did not use this as an attention getter, in front of the 5000, but as a sign to a small few. He wanted them to know that he truly is the Son of God, but not in the context of spectacular demonstrations.

Still others in the crowd, since the story takes place in Jesus' own neighborhood, rebuke Jesus when he says that He is sent by the Father/God, while those in the crowd know Joseph, the carpenter (who they "know" is his real father), and they are confused as to the real meaning of what Jesus is trying to convey.

This confusion continues in today's reading, the Pharisees are once again taking exception to Jesus. Why does he not demand that ritual purity and washing of hands before eating is observed, as they are accustomed to?

But, Jesus is trying to teach a new way of life based on Mercy, Love, and Truth. Jesus is asking them to make a new CHOICE, a choice that will give them everlasting life; and he is telling them of the Eucharist he will give them to strengthen them in this life. With today's readings He is trying to get them to focus on what comes from the heart not what comes from empty words or actions.

In today's second reading the admonition echoes, we hear this question. "Are you a "hearer" or a "doer." Choosing Jesus' way is not easy even today.

Jesus knew change would not be easy, and yet Jesus would not compromise His position.

**Fast forward to today.** Are we making good choices? Today's scripture and liturgy call out to us;

1. Are *we* making good choices in our lives in the context of today's world?
2. Do we choose to abide and partake in Jesus through Eucharist?
3. Do we choose to live a Life of Christ in active participation? Or are we just along for the ride?

In a recent discussion here in Northeast Ohio an interesting point was made. Perhaps in our culture the biggest issue is not what we overtly do, like stealing or lying—which we know are bad—but in our passivity, those things **we do not do.**

Do we go along with inappropriate behavior at work?

Do we go through the physical motions of participation in Liturgy and mentally disengage, catching up on our “down time” during Mass?

Do we complain a lot about our community and Government but fail to study the issues and vote.

Are we aware of issues around the globe from reliable sources and take those little actions of cards and letters and perhaps gifts to support Love Mercy and Truth from a well informed position.

Are we tuned in to what is happening around us or do we simply and passively do nothing? Or perhaps worse, do we act in such a way that supports a position while really not supporting it at all, thinking it’s just easier to go along?

CHOICES, was a theme that Pope John Paul II used in the closing of the World Youth Gathering in the year 2000 using many of these scripture passages also in the context of a Eucharistic celebration. To quote him in part;

In today’s Eucharistic celebration, Jesus helps us to come to know a particular aspect of his mystery. In the Gospel of John, we listened to a part of his discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. In it he reveals himself as the true bread of life, the bread which has come down from heaven to give life to the world (cf. *Jn* 6:51). These are words that those who hear him do not understand. Their outlook is too material for them to grasp what Christ really means. They are thinking in terms of flesh, which “is of no avail” (*Jn* 6:63). Jesus’ words, instead, have to do with the unlimited horizons of the spirit: “The words that I have spoken to you – he insists – are spirit and life”

But his hearers are hesitant: “This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?” (*Jn* 6:60). They consider themselves to be persons of common sense, with their feet on the ground. (*They know the rules*). For this reason they shake their heads and go away muttering, one after another. The initial crowd gradually grows smaller. At the end, only the tiny group of his most faithful disciples remains. But with regard to the “bread of life” (*and clearly expecting a true change of heart*) Jesus is not prepared to back down. Rather, he is ready to lose even those closest to him: “Will you also go away?” (*Jn* 6:67).

[LOOK UP]

“Will you also?”

Christ’s question cuts across the centuries and comes down to us; it challenges us personally and calls for a decision. What is our answer? Dear people, if we are here today, it is because we identify with the Apostle Peter’s reply: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”

Submitted by

Rev. Mr. Dennis Guritza  
Deacon, St. Joan of Arc Parish  
Chagrin Falls, Ohio