

OT XXI Homily

The readings of this 21st Sunday of OT teach us that Christian life is a succession and a combination of daily choices for God or against God, as we choose to live out or reject the truths He has revealed through His prophets in the Old Testament, and especially through His Son Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The fundamental choice we make determines how we live our lives, deciding whom we will serve.

In the first reading, Joshua challenges the Israelites to decide whether they will serve the gods of their fathers, the gods of the Amorites, in whose country they are presently dwelling, or the God of the Israelites, who has done so much for them. The Renewal of Covenant ceremony in Joshua chapter 24, reminds us that the Eucharist is a Covenant meal that calls for our decision of Faith. Whenever we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we need to renew our vows to Him and say, “Jesus, I love”. Then the same love which is given us in return, will fill our lives with all that we need to remain faithfully with Him and in Him.

Today’s Responsorial Psalm (Ps 34) reminds us that in choosing God for our God, we are choosing Life and His Eternal faithfulness and Love, as our shelter and salvation.

The second reading emphasizes the unity that must exist in the Body of Christ, and the intimate relationship between Jesus and His followers. It also challenges the Ephesian Christians to make the right choice in life and build Christian marriages on mutual respect and love, accepting each other’s rights and dignity. Jesus also uses the husband-wife relationship as an analogy to explain the close relationship between Christ and the Church. Paul reminds us that Jesus nourishes us, the members of His Church, through the Eucharist, making us His own flesh and blood, as husband and wife become one flesh.

Concluding his long Eucharistic discourse, Jesus, in today’s Gospel, challenges his Jewish audience, and later His apostles, to make their choice: to accept Him as the true Bread from Heaven, who gives them His Body and Blood as their Heavenly Food, or to join those who have lost their Faith in Jesus, and left Him. Today’s Gospel describes the various reactions of the people to Jesus’ claims. Many of the disciples leave, but the apostles freely choose to stay with Jesus. In this Eucharistic celebration, we, too, are called to make a decision, profess our Faith in God’s Son, and renew the Covenant ratified in his Life, death and Resurrection.

Brothers and Sisters,

Let us make our choice for Christ and live it: We Christians have accepted the challenge of following the way of Christ and making choices for Christ, fortified by the Bread He gives and relying on the power of His Holy Spirit.

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 in the community to which we belong. 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. Bread for the hungry, drink for the thirsty.