

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time



We gather together this week as a community of believers anticipating that the will of God be revealed to us. We are united by our common experience with a state of slavery—the endless cycle of addiction that we cannot break free of ourselves. It impacts us as individuals, and the effects of lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and unhealthy attachments are felt by the family and community around us. *Knowing better* does not equate to *doing better* without the help of divine aid.

Years of active addiction and constant exposure unhealthy sexual attitudes can cast doubt on the Lord directly transforming our lives. After time, we grow weary and begin to confuse our own incapacity for God's. At some point, we are confronted with the truth that no human power can relieve us of this condition and our solution must include God.

Jesus speak to our doubt in this week's Gospel Reading, concluding our six-week look at the 6th chapter of John's Gospel and the Bread of Life discourse. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him," we hear Jesus say to a large crowd that just witnessed him perform a miracle. Many are willing to accept the fruits of His miraculous work, but not all are willing to conform to His will.

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, "Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail.

It's not easy to comprehend the grace that will accompany us as we attempt to do the will of God. We must shed our status as individuals and claim membership in the Body of Christ. Taking on the identity of sons of God helps us accept and conform to His will, even when others abandon Him. The 6th chapter of John concludes:

As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"

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*Simon Peter answered him,
"Master, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
We have come to believe
and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."*

As human power and authority has the tendency to disappoint, God's authority can penetrate through the most hopeless of situations. Many in recovery advise newcomers "don't leave before the miracle happens," which implies that the true gift of recovery is the personal freedom that accompanies a life surrendered to Christ. Perseverance through trials and temptation in our addiction recovery will offer spiritual growth and confidence to stand firmly in our faith.

United in Christ, we can look back upon where we've come from and share the feelings of the Israelites from this week's First Reading:

*For it was the Lord, our God,
who brought us and our fathers up
out of the land of Egypt,
out of a state of slavery.
He performed those great miracles
before our very eyes
and protected us along our entire journey and
among the peoples through whom we passed.
Therefore we also will serve the Lord,
for he is our God.*

- What miracles have you witnessed that can serve as a reminder of God's abundant authority?
- Are you willing to go to any length to overcome whatever *state of slavery* you're currently experiencing?
- What *hard teachings* are you willing to look at for the sake of knowing Christ more intimately?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 34:2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21

2nd Reading: Ephesians 5:21-32

Gospel: John 6:60-69