



Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 26th August 2018

In England & Wales:

Cycle of Prayer – Those who suffer persecution and denial of human rights

Keynote: Time to choose whether to serve the Lord

Book of Joshua 24: 1-2, 15-18

After a lengthy migration through the wilderness, Joshua, after the death of Moses has led the People of the Israel, into the Land of Promise. Now they are to make a choice. Joshua said to all the people: *'If you will not serve the Lord, choose today whom you wish to serve... as for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.'* Despite all their grumblings on that long and hard journey, the people remember how the Lord God had freed them from slavery in Egypt, and had kept that promise of deliverance. The people answered, *'we have no intention of deserting the Lord God, and serving other gods... we too will serve the Lord, for he is our God.'* In the gospel passage today Jesus, like a Joshua of the New Testament, addresses his followers: *'What about you, do you want to go away?'* Maybe today, is a day of choice for us too?

Responsorial Psalm 33 (34): 2-3, 16-23 – A song of the just man in praise of the saving God

Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 5: 21-32

In contrast to the customs and values of our present today, remember the apostle Paul writes in the context of the culture of his age. It was a time when women were treated like chattels, mere possessions of their men folk! Paul's words are quite revolutionary in the context of his time! *'Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church... (they) must love their wives as they love their own bodies... a man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it.'* At the heart of what Paul is saying is that deep sense of fundamental equality in Christ through our one baptism and through the gift of the Spirit we share. *'This mystery,'* writes the apostle *'has many implications, but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.'* No longer Greek, or Jew, male or female, slave or free, we are now one – equal in Christ. Our behaviours and the way we treat others are transformed by living in Christ, and by our common discipleship. The Christian Church surely has a message for the world of today; one we must live up to.

Gospel according to John 6: 60-69

Jesus presents to each disciple the invitation to serve: *'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.'* Whether it is the words of Jesus about the Eucharist, or the simple choice of whether to live by the values of the gospel, the choice is there for each of us – to accept Jesus' words, or to say, as some did, *'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?'* But that is just the point, for Jesus says, *'there are some of you who do not believe... that is why I told you no one could come to me unless the Father allows it.'* In the gospel passage today the evangelist tells us *'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, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe. We know you are the Holy One of God."*

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