

Deacon Bob Corsaro
21st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B
Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b
Psalm 34
Ephesians 5:21-32
John 6: 60-69

A bunch of guys are sitting around a table, and the question comes up. “Who has been married the longest?” Tony raises his hand and says “Next month I will be married to Angelina for 50 years.”

“Wow”, his buddies say, “What’s the secret to your success?” Anthony responds, “Its easy, I do something special on our big anniversaries!”

They ask, “What did you do on your 25th?” He replied, “Hey, I took her to Italy!”

They ask, “What are you going to do on your 50th?”

Tony replies “ I think I’ll go back and get her!”

So, You might ask, Deacon Bob, how in the heck does this story have to do connect with today’s readings?

Lets take a look at something here....

Did you notice the common thread connecting the three readings today? All three pointed to commitment.

In the 1st reading: Joshua addressed the people, **“decide today whom you will serve!”**

In the second reading, Paul tells us: **Live in love with each other, as Christ loves the church.**

And In the Gospel: Jesus challenges the 12 remaining disciples...**Do you also want to leave?**

Commitment, commitment, commitment!

Now the story about Tony is hardly an example of commitment!

Sure, 50 years have passed for Tony, but the last 25 years with Angelina have been empty.

There really is nothing to celebrate.

So, what do Tony and many of the disciples in today's Gospel reading have in common?

Tony understood the responsibilities of marriage.

He just couldn't accept them.

25 years ago he turned his back to them.

Like Tony, many of the disciples in today's gospel have reached a crucial moment of their own....

Remember...In John's Gospel, it was just the night before that the disciples had watched Jesus' self revelation, as he walked on the stormy sea.

Jesus said to them "Courage, It is I, do not be afraid!"

The close followers of Jesus had been shown and told who it is who speaks to them....., yet some from this circle of disciples found Jesus' discourse, (last Sunday's gospel reading) the bread of life, unacceptable, harsh offensive.... "eat my flesh, drink my blood."

The original Greek word used was "skleros" meaning not hard to understand but hard to accept.

And as a result, many of his disciples turned away.

They failed because they were looking to Jesus in human terms. Terms of the flesh. They were repelled by the words in their literal sense.

BUT, The words of Jesus are of the Spirit...Spirit and life. What matters is the life giving power of the spirit....

The Spirit gives life, made available to the disciples, to us, through the revelation of God, in and through the word of Jesus.

And when WE have the spiritual discernment, to see Jesus with the eyes of faith, we can understand what it is to assimilate the living bread, to enjoy eternal life.

A true commitment is a spirit filled response to the father made known through the word of Jesus. The word of Jesus is the essential nourishment of the community, its spirit its life.

Jesus asked the 12, “Do you wish to go away?” Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy one of God.”

Consider our parish mission statement: Its in the bulletin... Take a few moments to read it, reflect on it... It reads:

As sisters and brothers baptized in Christ, our mission is to be Christ for one another, our community, and the world by teaching as Jesus did, loving as Jesus loved, serving as Jesus served, and by seeing in every face the face of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As modern day Christians, what do we find hard to accept?
How do we commit?

God , through the Word seems to be challenging us to commitment and covenant....to God's embrace.

If we think about what it means to enter into an embrace, it means our arms have to be empty, both ours and God's.

Otherwise, whatever we are holding onto comes between us, whether it is good or bad. It is only when our arms are empty that we can fully embrace.

Look to how God embraced us: Philippians 2: 5-8:

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is yours in Christ Jesus,
Who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equity with God something to be grasped,
Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Wow, talk about commitment!

Jesus was totally vulnerable, in humility and poverty, and He invites us to commit to Him, embrace Him, arms wide and ourselves totally vulnerable, just ourselves in all humility and poverty.

Do we turn our backs to this, and walk away? Or like Peter in today's gospel, do we embrace Jesus?

Today, as we prepare to embrace Jesus through the Eucharistlet us take a moment to embrace each other, as a Christian Community, husbands wives, children, friends.

If you will, please join hands, as Jesus tells us, to love God and one another:

Jesus, as we prepare to embrace you through the Eucharist, we embrace one another with your love, your peace.

Our hands become your hands embraced with the commitment to love one another.

To Comfort each other in times of illness, or fear,

To Care for each other in times of grieving,

To Assist each other as we care for the poor,

To Support and encourage each other through our daily trials,

Jesus, Bless our hands as they become your hands when we offer your love, your peace to one another. Amen