



Aug. 22, 2021 John 6: 56-69 Joshua 24:1-2a
www.theark1.com [Zoom Connection](#)
 Connie May © 7/20/06
 Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck
<http://conniesquestion.blogspot.com/>

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Tough stuff in today's reading. Tough to understand. Tougher to live into the reality if understood. Now is the time to decide. Many go, some stay.

Try to imagine yourself on the hillside that day. You came looking for good news, and now you struggle with shocking news.

What might cause you to leave?
 What might help you to stay?
 If you go, do you think you will sleep peacefully tonight?
 If you stay, will you sleep peacefully tonight?

Jn. 6: 56-69

56 Whoever **eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains** in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the **living Father** sent me and I **live** because of the **Father**, so the one who **feeds** on me will **live** because of me. 58 This is the **bread** that came down from **heaven**. Your forefathers ate **manna** and **died**, but he who **feeds** on this **bread** will **live forever**." 59 He said this while **teaching** in the **synagogue** in **Capernaum**. 60 On hearing it, many of his **disciples** said, "This is a hard **teaching**. Who can **accept** it?" 61 Aware that his **disciples** were **grumbling** about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this **offend** you? 62 What if you see the Son of Man **ascend** to where he was before! 63 The **Spirit** gives **life**; the **flesh** counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are **spirit** and they are **life**."

64 Yet there are some of you who do not **believe**." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not **believe** and who would **betray** him. 65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can **come to me** unless the **Father** has enabled him." 66 From this time many of his **disciples turned back** and no longer followed him. 67 You do not want to **leave** too, do you?" Jesus asked the **Twelve**. 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the **words of eternal life**. 69 We **believe** and know that you are the **Holy One of God**"

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus sets out the membership criteria and to stay or not to stay; that is the question. Where are you in making your decision?

PRAYER: How often Lord your teachings challenge me to stretch way beyond my comfort zone. Many times I am too troubled to even hear clearly what you are really saying. But more often than not, I go away grumbling because you put me in a situation that I have to make tough choices. Help me as I struggle to decide, for I do believe that you are the Holy One of God. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

FLESH / BLOOD: Flesh and blood when combined signifies life. On the cross, they are separated and signify death. Jesus keeps the two together in the only place in this gospel that deals with the Eucharistic establishment. *What is it about the bread and wine that make them a suitable vehicle imaging and becoming the whole Jesus: When you receive communion, are you aware that you are becoming one in Christ?*

EATS / DRINKS: In order to live we need to eat and drink. What we eat and drink becomes us. In the Eucharist we believe that we become what we eat and drink. *How has receiving the Eucharist changed you into itself? How is your life different because of it?*

REMAINS: To remain is to stay with someone or stay somewhere. *How does receiving the Eucharist enable you to stay with Jesus, and with the Father?*

LIVING: Jesus reminds us in this text that the Father is a living being. *How does the word living inform you about Jesus' understanding of God?*

FATHER: The father of a family stood next in line with God in the power structure of Jesus' day. He had absolute authority to make decisions for himself and his family, conditioned only by the laws of God. *Does the role of Father help or hinder your understanding of God?*

FEEDS: Jesus wants us to be nourished or fed by him. His flesh and blood mingle and merge with our flesh and blood. We become more our true selves by being united with him. *How are you aware of being more because of being united with Christ?*

BECAUSE: Jesus says he will be the cause of life / eternal life for us. *How does he become the cause of life/ eternal life for you?*

FOREFATHERS: Those who came before thought they were preserved by the manna in the desert. Nonetheless they died. The people clung to this memory as their connection with the divine. *How is Jesus changing the people's connection with divinity in this passage?*

TEACHING: Jesus' words excited new life in the hearts of those who listened to him about God. *Is there anything about these words today that excites new life in your heart about God?*

SYNAGOGUE: The synagogue was the local place of learning about God. *How does your place of worship enable you to learn about God in a way that differs from other places?*

CAPERNAUM: Capernaum now becomes the place where Jesus finishes his Galilean mission. It is where he sets out the conditions for continuing on with him. *Can you remember a place where you had to make a final decision to stay the same or to move on? What feelings do you remember about that place?*

DISCIPLES: There were many who followed Jesus up to this time that were known as disciples, or someone who was studying under a teacher. In the moment of real choice many 'dropped out' of his classes. *Have you ever 'dropped out' of one of Jesus' classes? Did you ever choose to take it again at a later time?*

ACCEPT: Those who 'dropped out' did so because they could not accept what he was saying about himself and God. *Is there anything in this text that you find terribly hard to accept?*

GRUMBLING: In some translations the word arguing is used here. Both words imply that the people were not happy or in agreement about what are being said. *Is there anything about this text that causes you to grumble or argue?*

OFFEND: Jesus' words offend the people, and they in response fend him off. Sir Isaac Newton said; "to every action there is an equal reaction". *Why do you think the people were offended, not just simply confused?*

ASCEND: Jesus, the Incarnation of God, descended and became part of our space and time. He now talks of the time when he will ascend once again. In effect he ups the ante and people cannot see it through and pass. *Do you think you could have stayed with the twelve or would you have passed too?*

SPIRIT: Flesh alone cannot bring full understanding. Spirit, God's Spirit, is what can bring that understanding

to completion.

How is God's Spirit working in you today to bring you to full understanding?

BELIEVE: Sometimes we can move forward only by taking something on trust because we trust the one bringing the new to us.

What do you think got in the way of those who chose to leave and not continue following Jesus? What could they not believe?

BETRAY: Eventually Jesus would be handed over to those who wanted him dead. Their belief was not strong enough to carry them through.

Have you ever 'betrayed' Jesus by not being strong enough to stand with him in a time of choosing?

COME TO ME: Jesus knew that the Father was the source of faith. In fact, they were there because God was drawing them to him.

How is God drawing you to God's self? Is there anything in this gospel that draws you to God?

TURNED BACK / LEAVE: Many turned back and left in this moment of choice.

Do you think any of them reconsidered their choice after the Resurrection?

TWELVE: Twelve being the number of completion and indicates that enough stayed with Jesus in order to go on.

What do you need now to be able to continue on from here in your faith life?

ETERNAL LIFE: Eternal life, life without end, is the goal of the people's search.

Is this also your goal as you meditate on these words?

HOLY ONE OF GOD: Early on, the demons identify Jesus as the Holy One of God (Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34). Now finally, the disciples accept this truth as well.

What needs to happen for you to accept this truth more fully today?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 6:63 // Jn. 3:6; Jn. 6: 65 // Jn. 6:37, 44; Jn. 6:69 // Jn. 11:27; Mt. 16:16-17;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Jos. 24: 1-2, 15-18; Ps. 34: 2-3, 16-23; Eph. 5:21-32; Jn. 60-69; Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Kings 8:1,6,10-11, 22-30, 41-43; Ps. 84; Eph. 6:10-20; Jn. 56-69;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION: Peter thinks he speaks for the Twelve, but Jesus knows better. Actually, any Mediterranean person would know better. In the Mediterranean world, allegiance between each member of a faction and its leader is strong. The leader has recruited each member personally and individually. But the allegiance between faction members is very weak. If they know each other at all, it is only superficially. They have no in-depth psychological insight into other persons. Moreover, they could care less about the other faction members. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approach Jesus to seek higher honors than the other ten when Jesus enters into the fullness of his rightful honor (Mk. 10:37). The others become understandably indignant (an understatement in view of the typical Mediterranean penchant for venting emotions).

Pilch, John. *The Cultural World of Jesus*. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1996. Page 128.

Peter's response translated into Mediterranean cultural values is: we have made a commitment to you, no matter what ("we have believed"). Identifying Jesus as the "Holy One of God" echoes the Old Testament use of this phrase to identify men consecrated to God. Samson was so described (Judg 13:7; 16:7), as was Aaron (Ps 106:16). In John 10:36, Jesus describes himself as "the one whom the Father made holy;" and in John 17:19, Jesus says, "It is for them [my disciples] that I make myself holy."

Peter thinks he speaks for the Twelve, but Jesus knows better. Actually, any Mediterranean person would know better. In the Mediterranean world, allegiance between each member of a faction and its leader is strong. The leader has recruited each member personally and individually.

But the allegiance between faction members is very weak. If they know each other at all, it is only superficially. They have no in-depth psychological insight into other persons. Moreover, they could care less about the other faction members. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approach Jesus to seek higher honors than the other ten when Jesus enters into the fullness of his rightful honor (Mark 10: 37). The others become understandably indignant (an understatement in view of the typical Mediterranean penchant for venting emotions).

Jesus' observation that one of the Twelve is "a devil" may well have come from the hand of the editor who adds his after-the-fact comment: "He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray

him.” Mediterranean people generally judge others only on externals (see 1 Sam 16:7).

Pilch, John J. [The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle B](#). Collegetown, MN. The Liturgical Press. 1996. Page 128

What we are being asked “to eat” is that other part of his body, the community, the flawed body of believers here on earth. In essence, Jesus is saying: You cannot deal with a perfect all-loving, all-forgiving, all-understanding God in heaven, if you cannot deal with a less-than-perfect, less-than-forgiving, and less-than-understanding community here on earth. You cannot pretend to be dealing with an invisible God if you refuse to deal with a visible family. Teaching this truth can ruin one’s popularity in a hurry. People then found it to be “intolerable language” and it meets with the same resistance today.

Rolheiser, Ronald. [The Holy Longing](#). NY. Doubleday. 1999.

Jesus knew well whereof he spoke when he promised “Anyone who eats this bread will live forever.” This bread of renewing and revitalizing our lives. This bread of never ceasing to search for deeper and deeper meaning in our happiness and in our hurts. This bread of being attentive as we make the daily decisions which prepare us to make the larger ones. This bread of welcoming the beauty and goodness of life as it is revealed in nature. This bread of being involved in our lives as they are sometimes broken and poured out for others. This bread of embracing the mystery of life and this wonders revealed as it unfolds.

To “eat this bread” requires the kind of courage of which Robert Louis Stevenson spoke: “The world has no room for cowards. We must be ready to toil, to suffer, to die. And yours is not less noble because no drum beats when you go out to your daily battlefields, as no crowds shout when you return from your daily victory and defeat.”
Ripple, Paula. [Growing Strong at Broken Places](#). Notre Dame, IN. Ave Maria Press. 1971.

Real life comes to be itself precisely in moving beyond the limits of control and certainty. Trust is integral to real life. We have an inner need to trust, to believe, to live in a mutual recognition with others. Interdependency cannot happen without it. This interdependency is energized by the unpredictable and new which occurs when separate beings merge and form a new reality. This is life which comes to itself beyond the predictable, secure, and controllable. Fr. David Bock

The love we celebrate and reinforce in the Eucharist, however, is not easy. No love is ever easy, because the attractive, repellant powers involved in love are so powerful. We are drawn to one another and we are afraid of one another. We want to give ourselves, but we fear being hurt; we want to be united with the other, yet the other terrifies us. We want the ecstasy that comes from union, but we do not want to pay the price of surrender. We want to run toward the other, but when we get close we want to flee. We want to incorporate the other and be incorporated by the other; we are terrified, though, that we will lose our identity by such an act. So we compromise, not giving ourselves over to complete love but also not retreating into hate. The name of the compromise is ambivalence, a mixture of love and hate, with love being just a little bit stronger, keeping the intimacy from breaking apart. It characterizes our marital loves, our close friendships, relationships between parents and children, and relationships with our fellow Christians and with God.

Greeley, Andrew. [When Life Hurts](#). Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1988.

I don’t know Who – or what – put the question, I don’t know when it was put. I don’t even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone – or Something – and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal. Dag Hammarskjöld

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Halpin, Marlene, O.P. [Leading Prayer](#). Brown Pub. Dubuque, IA. 1990. LORD TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? Page 150.

Mitchell, Stephen. [The Enlightened Heart](#). Harper & Row, NY. 1989. LOVE FLOWS.: Page 65. WONDERS HAPPEN: Page 133.

Grana, Janice Ed. [Images](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona MN 1976. NOT FOR THE HESITANT: Page 130. CHOICES: page 141.