

Homily for 21 (B) 2018

“What about you, do you want to go away too?”

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What is faith, and how do we do it? How do we make the choices for God that today’s readings encourage us to make? Well, there are the choices that are in some way fundamental, like the choices we make at baptism, marriage, ordination, and there are the choices that we make on a day to day and hour to hour basis, like the office worker who decided to try walking on air. The first shape a life over the long term as we learn to become Christians, or married, or priests or religious or whatever. The second shape life over a shorter term, sometimes dramatically, as in the case of the story that I have just told.

We must choose, we have chosen, and we choose continually. Life is a process, a movement, a continual conversion. Pope John XXIII adopted as his motto, “Now I begin.” Every day we are confronted with the choice to follow the Lord or to go a different way. Every day we renew our determination to be his disciples. Every day we choose him.

And what a choice this is! Our choice is a choice of life over death. Our choice is a choice of meaning over futility. Our choice is a choice of the divine over the mundane. St. Paul tells the Romans and us, “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.”

The choice of the Lord gives us the same gift that Peter and the disciples received. The choice of the Lord results in our sharing the Bread of Life, the Body and Blood of Christ. This is not just something we do every Sunday. The Eucharist is our participation in the death and resurrection of the Lord. Our choice of the Lord results in our sharing the Lord dying for each of us, rising from the dead for each of us and giving eternal life, eternal happiness and joy to each of us.

And there are, marvellously, two levels to all this: the fundamental option – to cleave to Christ for the rest of one’s life, and the day to day opportunity to renew that pledge. There is good news and bad news here. Day by day we can also choose a different path and leave the way to God and fulfilment. We can get lost in little things and stray down dead ends. But we can also, every day, and every minute of every day, make things better. And don’t be discouraged. I may

make it sound like life is perilously beset by dangers of every sort, but it's not, for we have taken the fundamental option for Christ and the spiritual quality of our lives is upheld by the God who has chosen us and is enhanced by our constant acts of rededication. The more we walk with God, the less likely we are to fall away into darkness. Not that we don't make wrong choices and commit crass errors, but we have such help in picking ourselves up again that the life of faith and goodness can always triumph if we let it. Now I begin again, said the Pope. We need to say that to ourselves sometimes, but there is no shame in it, and the angels sing for joy when we do.