

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

GOSPEL

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After hearing his doctrine many of the followers of Jesus said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this upset you? What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?'

'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.

'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset those who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. He went on, 'This is why I told you that no one could come to me unless the Father allows him.' 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 that you are the Holy One of God.'

(John 6:60-69)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- This is another example of how Peter, in the gospels, often takes a leadership role among the twelve.
- Peter's role of leadership among the chosen is why, to this day, his successor, the Pope, has a special position among the leaders of the Church.
- In John's Gospel, the author often uses the device of 'dualism' to contrast life in the Spirit with the life of this earthly existence.
- There is no institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper in John's Gospel. That occurs earlier in this passage. At the supper, Jesus washes the feet of his

disciples.

EXPLORING THE WORD

For several weeks we have been following the story of Jesus' revelation of himself as the one sent from God, and of how his followers may draw life from him by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. In this text, we find that it is not only 'the Jews' who find it difficult to accept his revelation and his teaching. Even his followers struggle with this truth. Jesus knows of their struggle but will not be drawn into offering supernatural proof of his revelation: the Son of Man ascending to heaven! Some do not understand his words and cease to follow him. Jesus then turns to his closest companions and offers them a choice: they may go or they may stay. Peter responds on behalf of them all. It is a wonderful affirmation of faith. 'Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we believe. We know that you are the Holy One of God.'

This choice is not based on clear understanding but on faith and on love for Jesus. The mystery of God often defies understanding, but faith is the key to a share in it.

- Freedom of choice is essential to the Christian message. What made you choose to follow Christ?
- 'Lord to whom shall we go?' What are the alternatives to Christian faith that are offered by 'the world'? How attractive are those options to you?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Are there things that stop you believing in all that Jesus taught? What do you find most challenging in the teaching of Jesus?
- Have you ever been tempted to walk away? What has kept you on the journey?
- This week, spend time in reflecting on your journey so far. What are you finding a challenge? Are you able to freely make the commitment to the Holy One of God?
- What are some of the significant choices you have made in your life? Do you weigh things up carefully, examining the pros and cons, or do you rely on gut feeling and an emotional response in your decision-making process? Share your experiences.
- During this week, make Peter's declaration of faith your own:

Lord, to whom shall we go?

You alone have the words of eternal life and we believe.

