



AMDG
21ST SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR B
22ND AUGUST 2021



**‘You have the message of eternal life,
and we believe!’**

OPENING PRAYER

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful
to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found.

This Sunday, the readings invite us to consider honestly the depth of our love for the Lord. The same challenging questions once put to the Israelites by Joshua, and later to the disciples by Jesus, are being asked of us today.

The tribes of Israel are gathered at Shechem. They answer Joshua’s challenge by declaring why they intend to serve the Lord. (*First Reading*)

The *Second Reading* is full of social codes and expectations that would have been well understood by those to whom they were addressed. In essence, these words are a discourse on the deep love that Christ has for the Church, a love so strong that it is compared to an intimate, loving relationship between husband and wife.

The full mystery of this love has been revealed over the last few Sundays, and again today, in the conclusion to Jesus’s teaching on the Living Bread of Life (*Gospel*). For many of Jesus’s followers, this proves too challenging. Turning to the Twelve, Jesus asks if they want to leave too. But Peter speaks for them all, and perhaps for the whole Christian community, in saying: ‘*Lord who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life.*’

Once again we hear the invitation in the *Psalms* to ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good’.

This week, we pray especially that our spiritual life may nourish us and all those around us, and that we may embody a loving commitment to follow the Lord at all times.

PSALM 33 (34): 2–3.16–23

R:/ Taste and see that the Lord is good.

I will bless the Lord at all times
his praise on my lips;
In the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad.

The Lord turns his face against the wicked
to destroy their remembrance from the earth.
The Lord turns his eyes to the just
and his ears to their appeal.

They call and the Lord hears
and rescues them in all their distress.
The Lord is close to the broken-hearted;
those whose spirit is crushed he will save.

Many are the trials of the upright
but the Lord will come to rescue them,
keeping guard over all their bones,
not one of their bones shall be broken.

Evil brings death to the wicked;
those who hate the good are doomed.
The Lord ransoms the souls of his servants.
Those who hide in him shall not be condemned.

I follow the rhythm of my breath and slowly allow my mind and body to settle.
When I am ready, I prayerfully read the words of the psalm, repeating the response
after every verse.

I notice which lines of the psalm I am more drawn to.

Resting my attention on these particular words, I slowly read and repeat them,
allowing their meaning to touch my heart and speak to my innermost desire.

I share with the Lord why this is important to me today ...

I ponder on where I have noticed the Lord's goodness expressed in my life.

In time, I bring my prayer to a close with my own words of gratitude for the Lord's
goodness.

GOSPEL JOHN 6: 60–69

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 them.' 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.'

I bring compassionate attention to how I sit, stand or lie, so that my body can be alert, yet comfortable, and ready to listen to the Lord.

After taking a couple of deeper, settling breaths, I let my breath find its own soothing rhythm. I gently encourage my mind to slow down and settle as I prepare to pray.

Now I turn to the text and slowly read it through as many times as I need to become familiar with it.

I imagine being part of the crowd of followers, or one of The Twelve.

I hear Jesus describing himself as the Bread of Life, and how we must eat of his flesh. Can I imagine what it would be like hearing this for the first time?

What can this really mean ... ? Am I shocked too?

What questions do I have for Jesus?

Thinking of my own faith journey, have there ever been times when I have struggled to understand this ...?

Or are there other teachings that I find upsetting?

I imagine Jesus turning to me and saying, '*Do you (my name) want to go away too?*'

Where else can I go? How do I answer Jesus?

I tell Jesus what words of his are 'spirit and life' for me.

I then share all that has arisen for me in my time of prayer, and together with Jesus pray '*Our Father ...*'

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips.

Psalm

'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.'

Gospel

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

Joshua 24: 1–2.15–18; Psalm 33 (34); Ephesians 5: 21–32; John 6: 60–69



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