

**Many of Jesus' Disciples Left Him (John 6, Part 5)
(21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)**

Joshua 24:1-2, 15-17, 18—Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve

1. Decision: “choose this day whom you will serve” (24:15)

Psalm 34—Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord

1. Doxology: “I will bless the LORD at all times...” (v. 1)
2. Answered Prayer: “the Lord is close to the brokenhearted...” (v. 18)

Ephesians 5:21-32—Wives Be Subordinate; Husbands Love Your Wives

1. Mutual Submission: “Be subordinate (Greek *hypotassomai*) to one another...” (5:21)
2. Wives: “be subordinate (Greek *hypotassomai*) to your husbands” (5:22)
3. Husbands: “love (Greek *agapaō*) your wives as Christ loved the church” (5:25)

John 6:60-69—Many of Jesus' Disciples Left Him

1. Disciples' Response: “...A hard saying, who can listen to it?” (6:60; cf. Lev 17:11-12)
2. Jesus' Responses: “Do you take offense at this?” (6:61)
3. Resurrection & Ascension: the Key to Understanding (6:62-63)
 - a. “What if you were to see the Son of Man *ascending*...?” (6:62)
 - b. “It is *the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail*”
4. Protestant Interpretation: Jesus speaks metaphorically; his flesh is “useless”

Ulrich Zwingli (Protestant Reformer): “Now I want no one to suffer himself to be offended by this painstaking examination of words; for it is not upon them that I rely, but upon the one expression ‘The flesh profiteth nothing’ (Jn 6:63). This expression is strong enough to prove that ‘is’ in this passage is used for ‘signifies’ or ‘is a symbol of’, even if the discourse itself contained absolutely nothing by which the meaning here could be detected... I have now refuted, I hope, this senseless notion about bodily flesh.” (See O’Connor, *The Hidden Manna*, 144).

4. Catholic Interpretation: Read Jesus' Words in Context!
 - a. “Spirit” (Greek *pneuma*) = Real (not metaphor!); “God is spirit” (John 4:24)
 - b. “The Flesh” (Greek *ho sarx*) = appearances (not Jesus' flesh!)
 - c. Example: “You judge according to the flesh (Greek *ho sarx*)...” (John 8:15)
 - d. Jesus says *six times* that *his* “flesh” is necessary (John 6:51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57)
 - e. “Spirit” and “Life” = Crucified and Risen Christ

Pope John Paul II on the Eucharist and the Resurrection

In the Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:54). This pledge of the resurrection comes from the fact that the

flesh of the Son of Man, given as food, *is his body in its glorious state after the resurrection*. With the Eucharist we digest, as it were, the “secret” of the resurrection. (John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* no. 18)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. What is the connection between the Old Testament text about making a decision to follow the Lord (Joshua 24) and making a decision to follow Christ (John 6)?

2.

2. What is the traditional Protestant interpretation of John 6:63? What was Ulrich Zwingli’s position?

3. What is the connection between the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and his Resurrection? What does Jesus mean when he says “my words are Spirit and Life” (John 6:63)?

For Further Study

1. Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (New York: Image, 2011), 75-115. A close analysis of John 6 in the light of the Old Testament and ancient Jewish traditions about the Messiah, the new Moses, and the new Manna from heaven.
2. James T. O’Connor, *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005). An absolutely fantastic study of the Eucharistic theology of the Church Fathers and the living magisterium. Must-reading.