

LECTIO DIVINA

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 22, 2021

Meditative listening: Your Words are Spirit and Life, O Lord Bernadette Farrell
<https://youtu.be/wLx2NZT7Voo>

Lord, to Whom Shall Go

Scott Soper <https://youtu.be/8fascm-m2-o>

Opening Prayer:

Blessed are you, O God, who has given us the bread of your Word to nourish our minds, and the bread of your Eucharist to nourish our souls. Be with us as we break open your Word. May your Spirit enlighten our minds and help us not only to be hearers of your Word, but also doers of your Word. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen

First Reading:

God's People Choose the Lord

God's people is conscious that it owes its freedom and its country to God's liber-ating love. The Hebrews choose to link their destiny to that of God and to serve him loyally.

Reading I Jos 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b

Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, summoning their elders, their leaders, their judges, and their officers. When they stood in ranks before God, Joshua addressed all the people: "If it does not please you to serve the LORD, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now dwelling.

As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

But the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD for the service of other gods. For it was the LORD, our God,

who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery. He performed those great miracles before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among the peoples through whom we passed. Therefore, we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 34:2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth.

Let my soul glory in the LORD; the lowly will hear me and be glad.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

The LORD has eyes for the just, and ears for their cry.

The LORD confronts the evildoers, to destroy remembrance of them from the earth.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

When the just cry out, the LORD hears them, and from all their distress he rescues them.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Many are the troubles of the just one but out of them all the LORD delivers him; he watches over all his bones; not one of them shall be broken.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

*As for me and my household,
we will serve the Lord*
Joshua 24:15

Second Reading:

The Covenant of Marriage

In marriage, the partners choose one another for lifelong love and fidelity and give themselves to one another as Christ gave himself for the Church.

Reading II **5:2a, 25-32**

Brothers and sisters:

Live in love, as Christ loved us.

Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ loved the church
and handed himself over for her to sanctify
her, cleansing her by the bath of water with
the word, that he might present to himself
the church in splendor, without spot or
wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be
holy and without blemish. So also husbands
should love their wives as their own
bodies. He who loves his wife loves
himself. For no one hates his own flesh
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,
even as Christ does the church,
because we are members of his body.

*For this reason a man shall leave his
father and his mother*

and be joined to his wife,

and the two shall become one flesh.

This is a great mystery, but I speak in
reference to Christ and the church.

Alleluia **Jn 6:63c, 68c**

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life;
you have the words of everlasting life.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel: Do You Choose Me?

The upsetting words of Jesus place a choice
before the disciples. Many leave. Peter,
apparently speaking in the name of all the
apostles, expresses his firm faith in the Lord.

Gospel **Jn 6:60-69**

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening
said, "This saying is hard; who can accept
it?" Since Jesus knew that his disciples
were murmuring about this, he said to them,
"Does this shock you? What if you were to
see the Son of Man ascending to where he
was before? It is the spirit that gives life,

while the flesh is of no avail. The words I
have spoken to you are Spirit and life.
But there are some of you who do not
believe."

Jesus knew from the beginning the ones
who would not believe and the one who
would betray him. And he said, "For this
reason I have told you that no one can come
to me unless it is granted him by my
Father." As a result of this, many of his
disciples returned to their former way of
life and no longer accompanied him.
Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also
want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him,
"Master, to whom shall we go? You have
the words of eternal life. We have come to
believe and are convinced that you are the
Holy One of God."

**After the FIRST reading of the Gospel, reflect
in silence on the following question: *What
word or phrase in this passage caught your
attention?***

*** After the second reading, reflect in silence
on the following question: *What in this
passage challenged/comforted you?***

*** After the third reading, reflect in silence on
the following question: *What conversion of
mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?***

With grateful heart we pray: Our Father...

Closing Prayer:

Father, God of the ever-new covenant,
the words you speak to us are spirit and life.
May the words we have pondered touch
us in the deepest part of ourselves that
we may share in Jesus' attitude of openness
to your will and to the needs of people.
May they move us to serve you not in a slavish
way but as your sons and daughters
in whom you recognize Jesus Christ,
your Son and our Lord for ever **Amen**

and say: “Lord, to whom else shall we go? You are the Lord of my life.”

Why do we stay in the Church even though we see glaring defects in its structures and members? For me personally I’d like to answer: because I also see its numerous qualities and beauty. The Church brings me its message of life and especially, I see the Lord present in it. It is my Church because I find my Lord there. He is present there in the Eucharist, he is present there in the community. And I know it is a Church on the way and so it cannot yet be perfect. For me the Church does not have to be perfect, for it is a Church of people and leaders who struggle and try, and so the Lord is there.

SHARING THOUGHTS ON EPHESIANS READING

FROM Fr. Jude Siciliano, *First Impressions*:

To our modern ears the second reading from Ephesians borders on the offensive -- maybe it even crosses over the line -- at least in our initial hearing. The Ephesians reading indicates that the early Christians adapted the “household codes” of their day, which came from the surrounding Hellenistic world. These were codes based on subjection, setting forth the duties of members of the household – husbands as the heads and then, wives, children, slaves. In the New Testament these codes were “Christianized,” usually by adding terms like, “in the Lord” or, as in Ephesians today, “out of reverence for Christ.”

But Ephesians breaks out of the cultural mold and presents marriage as a parable for the relations between Christ and his Church. The author begins with the usual household code’s teaching, “Wives should be subordinate to their husbands....” Then, elaborating in a more Christian sense, the author calls for the husband to love his wife without reservation. Now the



“The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” (Gospel)

Some thoughts for reflection

After Vatican II many were affected by the deeper insights in the Gospel and our faith which the Spirit had given to his Church: most were the result of deeper study or simply rediscoveries of neglected truths. To most people the renewal after the Council was like a deep breath of fresh air; but some went away sadly from the Church. They could not take it; there was no room for growth in their faith. Today Jesus asks us too: Can you grow in your faith? Do you choose me and my Church or do you stick to your own ideas? He invites us: choose me, grow in my life and my love.

Ever since we were baptized we belong to Christ as our Lord and Savior and brother. Have we ever made our baptismal choice a conscious, personal option for Christ? Do we confirm that choice by our everyday Christian living, in our dealings with those around us in love and justice and forgiveness? When our faith is put to the test do we renew our choice

emphasis shifts to the responsibility of the husband to his wife. So, the author (it's not certain it's Paul), while not changing the marriage institution in the Greco-Roman world of the time, asks Christians to live in a fundamentally different way. It's there in the opening statement, "Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ." In other words, live in a different way than those in the world around you. The husband, the master of the household, who owns all the property and has all the power, is to subordinate himself to the one who is regarded as powerless. Indeed, he is to see his wife as higher than himself!

How can the author ask such a world-shattering way of behaving? Because Jesus is the model of such behavior. Though he was Lord, he freely humbled himself and submitted himself out of love for us. Some Christian traditions, based on the one verse "Wives be subject to your husbands," take this verse out of context and apply it literally to the relationship between husband, wife and children. But, in its context, we can see that the complete text requires mutual self-sacrificing love, service and sharing.

SHARING THOUGHTS ON GOSPEL READING

Today's passage is an important moment in John's Gospel, a turning point. Jesus is challenging his disciples to make a decision, to accept the gift of himself, the bread of life (vv 51-58) -- or not. It is like the challenge put before the tribes at Shechem, requiring full acceptance and a life lived in conformity to the Lord. Will the disciples affirm this new covenant which Jesus is offering them.

All the disciples have witnessed Jesus' works and heard his teachings. But, just as coming to church, it is more than a matter of showing up. Like the disciples, we too are asked for a full

commitment to Christ, to see beyond the sign of the bread to the presence of the One who gives his whole life for us. Joshua and his household gave themselves totally to God. Jesus makes it clear to his disciples that God has given them the gift to believe in him, a gift we have also received. It is not only this faith that brings us here to worship and thanks. We are asked to respond to the One we receive: to follow him, share his life with one another and be the witnesses of his life to the world.