

## 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – by Father Dave “As for my house, we will serve the Lord”

The Book of Joshua is part of the Deuteronomistic History which chronicles the Israelites entry into the land, the rise of the kingdoms, and the eventual exile. The Book of Joshua tells of the conquest of the land, and the numerous battles the tribes fought in order to displace the peoples already living there.

In today's reading, Joshua (who succeeded Moses), is leading a covenant renewal ceremony to mark the occasion. *I like this selection!* Joshua reminds the people who brought them thru to the Promised Land safely. And he then gives them a choice as to which gods, or GOD, they will follow. He tells them that as for him and his family they “*will serve the Lord, for He is our God.*”

The reading from Paul many times causes problems both for the readers, and for the people in the pews. Most people hear the part “Wives be submissive to your husbands”, and then stop there. They don't read the part that tells husbands to “*Love their wives, even as Christ loved the Church.*” YOU SEE – marriage in Paul's day was a business arrangement between parents. How could it help a family to make a marriage match? Put another way – how many sheep would the woman bring into the family? Does her family have a lot of land? And so on.

The idea of marrying for love is mostly a concept from the last 200 years. Before that, parents got together and two of their children were chosen to get married – and then they all hoped for the best. So what Paul is saying in today's reading is really radical for his day. He is saying husbands should do more than treat their wives with respect. He is saying husbands should LOVE their wives, should cherish them.

Of all Olympic events, the marathon probably requires the most endurance. A road race of slightly more than twenty-six miles, its origin lies in ancient history. The legend tells that 1,525 years ago, a Greek by the name of Pheidippides, the central figure in the legend, ran that 26 mile distance (from Marathon to Athens) to tell the people of Athens that their army had just beaten the Persians in a three-day battle at Marathon. He had two possible routes: one was approximately thirty-five miles long and safer; the other was about twenty-six miles and included a very steep hill. We do not know which road Pheidippides selected, but tradition says that he ran without stopping. When he reached Athens, Pheidippides passed on the message of the victory and then collapsed and died.

In today's Gospel selection, Jesus watches as many of His followers abandon Him, unable to accept the challenge He has just presented. He has just told them that He is the bread of life, which will sustain them until they reach the kingdom of God. Perhaps the crowds misunderstand His words and take them literally as He speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Perhaps they are just unprepared to take on the demands of discipleship. As they leave Jesus, He tells them that His

words are spirit and life, but those same words fall on deaf ears.

Did Jesus think that His closest friends were also ready to abandon Him? He gave them their option: they could go or they could stay, but He could not change His message or His identity. He would not water down His teaching to suit the audience. The closest disciples would choose to accept what was being taught by Jesus. Peter has a wonderful response: “Lord, to whom would we go. You have the words of everlasting life, and we believe.” And in accepting this they acknowledge that Jesus was the Holy One of God and they would follow Him, however difficult the journey might become.

If Pheidippides had studied the difficult road between the victory over the Persian army at Marathon and the waiting and anxious people of Athens, he might never have started his epic run. Had he known that the journey would kill him, he might never have made the effort to run the whole distance. His message was of success and glory for his people with a promise of future security. Pheidippides' heart gave out only in a physical sense: his courage, self-sacrifice and integrity are immortal.

Olympic and Paralympic athletes only reach the Games because of their continuing determination to do the very best that they can. That is why they often talk more of their “personal best” than of their position in the final results. This is also why many athletes are surprisingly humble about their achievements, recognizing where they could have done better just as much as seeing where they have performed well. In a very real sense, these people are ambassadors and role models for others.

Jesus knew that His would be a hard act to follow. Nobody would find it easy to imitate His willingness to give His all, both to His Father and for His people. Where do I stand? Do I choose the easy path, even if it leads me further from God. Or do I opt for a life with Jesus, which might be harder and raise more questions but which, in the long run, brings heavenly happiness and joy?

One of the images, in Christian art, for the Church is that of a ship. Like any water craft, there are times when the waters are smooth. At other times the weather can be quite turbulent. We see that image in the one Gospel when the Apostles are fishing at night and Jesus is asleep in the boat. Jesus is awakened by the Apostles. He gets up, and rebukes the winds and the sea saying “Quiet, be still.”

When we turn to Jesus, He will calm the storms that we encounter on life's journey. Like Joshua, let us turn to the Lord. Like St. Peter, let us realize that Jesus has the words of everlasting life.

Let us pray for the Conversion of the World  
& for Peace.

**S**aints for the week –

**August 24 – St Bartholomew**, apostle – one of the original twelve apostles (and probably the same person as Nathaniel, whom Philip brought to see Jesus (John 1: 45 – 51). Like some other apostles, little is known about Bartholomew after Pentecost.

**August 27 – St Monica** – the mother of St Augustine and born in North Africa about the year 332. Married to a pagan, she had three children (2 sons and 1 daughter). Through her efforts her husband converted to Christianity in the year 370. Augustine disappointed her by choosing a life of pleasure and rejecting Christianity. Turning to God, Monica spent herself in earnest prayer for her wayward son. She followed Augustine to Rome in 383, and then to Milan in 386. There she learned that he was converted to Christianity.

**August 28 – St Augustine** – one of the great Christian teachers of all time, was born in north Africa of Patricius (a pagan) and Monica (a Christian). Augustine abandoned Christianity, led a wayward life, and continued wondering looking for meaning in life. He thirsted for wisdom, and found what he was seeking as he listened to the preaching of St Ambrose in Milan. Augustine describes his spiritual journey in his *Confessions*, which recall his great struggle with evil and sin and his final experience of God’s guiding grace. “*Late have I loved You, O Beauty ever ancient, O Beauty ever new!*” Augustine’s later life echoes with grateful praise for the God he discovered to be so good. Monica followed Augustine to Milan in 386 and was present at his Baptism by St Ambrose on Easter in 387.



**A MEMO FOR THE WEEK FROM GOD ...**

I Am God. Today I will be handling all of your problems.

Please remember that I do not need your help,  
& so just relax, and Trust Me.