

St. Boniface

Catholic Church

stboniface.net

230 1st St. NW - Lidgerwood, ND 58053

Also Serving St. Martin of Tours, Geneseo and Sts. Peter & Paul, Cayuga

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saint Boniface

Saturday - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:30 a.m.

Saint Martin of Tours - Geneseo

Sunday - 10:30 a.m.

Saints Peter & Paul - Cayuga

Sunday - 7:00 p.m.

August 25, 2024 - 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

To Whom Shall We Go?

A friend of mine, who is a far better Christian than I can ever hope to be, once shared with me that her family sneers at her belief system and lifestyle. She believes in fairy tales they tell her. She's looking for simple solutions from a kind-faced man in the sky because she doesn't want to grapple with complicated answers to complicated problems. Religion, they argue, is the easy way out.

As she spoke about this, her voice became unsteady. Not with anger, but with emotion. "I would never call this life easy," she said. "If I was looking for something that was easy, I wouldn't choose Catholicism."

What was unspoken was *why* she has chosen Catholicism. I know the answer, but only because I know her. I knew her before she chose it wholeheartedly, and I know her now, and I see the difference. I see that these words are written so clearly across the days of her life: "Master, to whom shall we go?" Once the truth is known in your soul, you see, it can never be unknown.

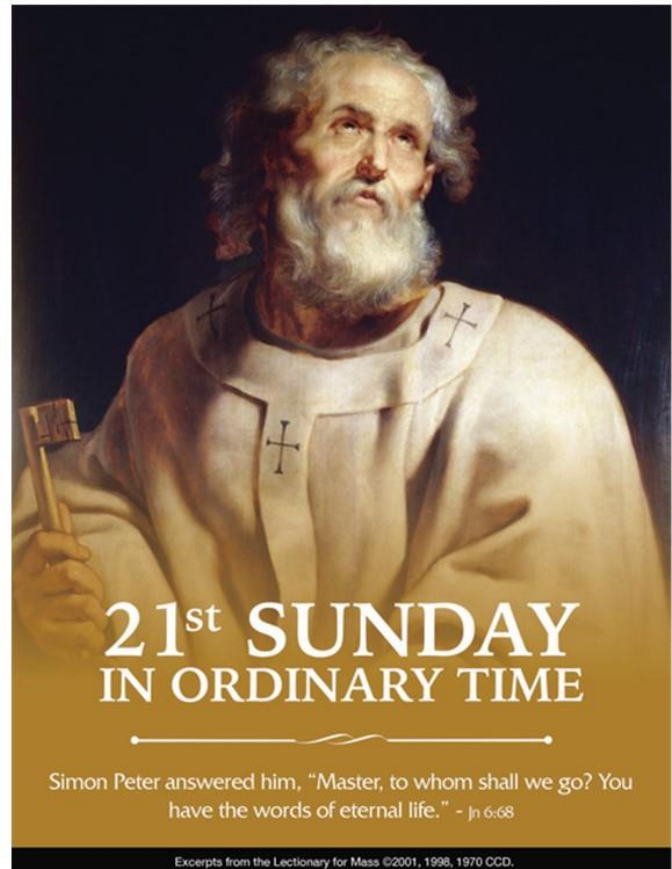
Following Christ is not about easy answers and simple teachings. Sure, it all sounds very basic: love one another as I have loved you. What could be more straightforward?

But what does that mean? What does that look like in daily, modern life, in a world full of the fallen, whose flaws have given us rough edges and weakened wills?

I'll tell you what it looks like — it looks like a struggle. It looks like failure and mess and confusion and losing your way and finding it again, all because you remembered that within you there is a compass pointing due north. It's a constant state of wandering in the dark, following a Voice that asks you to go where you're afraid to go. And you follow the Voice not because it's the only voice there is and not because it's the voice that says what you want to hear, but because it's the only one that speaks the truth, and the truth pulls on you in a way you can't quite resist.

When Christ asks, "Do you also want to leave?" he is not gaslighting us. It's a genuine question. We are free to go. We are not prisoners. But we have heard the words of everlasting life, and now we can only have peace if we follow where they lead.

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



Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b

Ephesians 5:21-32

John 6:60-69

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Weekly Mass Schedule



<u>Sunday Liturgies</u>		
Saturday, August 24	5:00 pm (St. B.)	† Roman Heley
Sunday, August 25	8:30 am (St. B.)	Pro Popula
	10:30 am (St. M.)	Special Intention
	7:00 pm (Sts. P&P)	† Greg Kulzer
<u>Weekday Liturgies</u>		
Monday, August 26	NO MASS	
Tuesday, August 27	10:00 am (St. B.)	† Michael Peterson
Wed., August 28	10:00 am (Dak. Estates)	Ron & Cindy Jelinek
Thursday, August 29	10:00 am (St. B.)	† Tom Kaczynski
Friday, August 30	10:00 am (St. B.)	† Erwin Lugert
<u>Sunday Liturgies</u>		
Saturday, August 31	5:00 pm (St. B.)	† Marcella Gettel
Sunday, Sept. 1	8:30 am (St. B.)	Pro Popula
	10:30 am (St. M.)	† Jim Smykowski
	7:00 pm (Sts. P&P)	Special Intention

Reconciliation Schedule

St. Boniface: Saturday & Sunday – Before/after Mass
Thursday – after Mass
St. Martin: Sunday – Before and after Mass
Sts. Peter & Paul – Before and after Mass

Prayer Requests

Please keep the following people in your prayers:
 Joan Moerke - Richard Novotny - Doug Spieker
 Steve Listopod - Peggy Harles - Rick Kane
 John Popp - Dan Frolek - Shelby Northrop
 Shirley Ahrens - Brad Meyer - Beth Stroehl
 Nick Podliska - Barb Perry
 If you have any imminent prayer requests, please call or text Cindy at 701-640-1401.

All Parishes

Eucharistic Adoration – We are in immediate need for someone to take the 3-4 pm adoration slot. Please contact Sharon at 612-790-1211 or 538-7010 if you are able to help. Adoration is open to all and is Thursdays from 5am to midnight.

St. Boniface Fall Bazaar will be held on Sunday, Sept. 8 from 11am – 1pm. Please pick up your raffle tickets in the gathering space. We need everyone's help to ensure success. Ladies, please be kind to your circle leaders when they call and be generous with your time, talents and pies! **If anyone would like to drop off their raffle tickets early, please give them to Melodi Novotny.**

Redeemed Eucharistic Congress - September 6-7 at the Jamestown Civic Center. This two-day Eucharistic event will serve as the local diocesan launch of the National Eucharistic Revival's Year of Mission. Reserve your place at this event by visiting www.fargodiocese.org/redeemed.

KC Council 4778 65th Anniversary Celebration and Picnic will be on Sunday, Aug. 25 at the KC Hall with a social at 4pm and supper at 5pm. Please bring a dish to share. The whole community is invited.

Calvary Cemetery Update – We are currently working on creating a computerized layout of the cemetery that we will be able to print and hang on the wall so that everyone will be able to find the graves of their loved ones more easily. You will also be able to see which graves are purchased and which are open and available to purchase.

Decision Time: It All Led Up To This

Jesus puts a hard question to the Apostles, and to us. The Church does a great job of situating his question in a context that shows exactly what is at stake: Do we want to live a one-flesh union of minds and wills with Jesus Christ — or do we want to place ourselves in servitude to his powerless opponents?

“Do you also want to leave?” he asks his Apostles. And “Yes, kind of,” seems to be their answer.

This is the moment when many of Jesus's disciples left him altogether. And it seems as if the Twelve are a little iffy on their prospects too. Peter's first reaction isn't to say, “No, we don't want to leave,” but to say words that could mean, “We wish we could leave, but we're stuck.” He says “Master, to whom shall we go?”

The Twelve have left their former lives for Jesus, but now Jesus has begun to say things that are hard to accept. After the miracle of the loaves, the people wanted to make him a king, so he let them know just what kind of king they were choosing. They were ready to proclaim him a New Moses but he went further, saying that their job is to “believe in him” because he “come down from heaven.” He capped it all off by saying they must *eat his flesh and drink his blood*, and it was all too much for them.

They said “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” Some Christians to this day don't accept it. In fact, they cite words from this Sunday's Gospel to reject it. Jesus says: “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,” and those who want to reject the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist take that as Jesus signaling that he is speaking symbolically, not literally.

But, clearly, when he said those words 2,000 years ago in Capernaum, no one thought he was only speaking symbolically. The next thing we learn is that: “As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.”

Why did they leave him? I like what Augustine says: “They understood flesh as [something that] is torn to pieces in a carcass or sold in a meat market, not as [something that] is enlivened by a spirit. And so it was said, ‘The flesh profits nothing.’” On the other hand, “Let spirit be added to flesh,” Augustine said, “and it profits very much. For if flesh

profited nothing, the Word would not have become flesh to dwell among us.”

And if flesh profited nothing, his death and resurrection in the flesh would have profited nothing either, for that matter.

But there is another important way to understand what he means by, “It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail.” And that’s this: Receiving communion is not magic. The chalice at Mass is not a “Holy Grail of Power” that grants superpowers to those who partake of it apart from a relationship with Christ. Without faith, the Eucharist does nothing — in fact, eating the flesh and blood of Christ without belief does harm, according to St. Paul.

In fact, the very next thing Jesus says is “But there are some of you who do not believe,” and the Gospel singles out Judas as who he is talking about, identifying this moment as the moment Judas left Jesus in his heart. And sure enough, later Judas betrays Jesus immediately after receiving communion at the Institution of the Eucharist. The Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is of no avail if you have no faith.

But look at what it does for St. Peter and St. Paul, who *do* have faith.

After his initial question, St. Peter gives a beautiful positive profession of faith; much like St. Paul does this Sunday.

After Peter asks “to whom shall we go?” he says, “You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

In other words, he’s not *stuck* with Jesus so much as he is *all-in* with Jesus. He is like a good theologian who has “faith seeking understanding.” He may not understand everything Jesus says, but he knows who Jesus is, so he will defend Jesus’s words, even when he can’t explain them.

St. John Chrysostom has high praise for Peter’s words here, calling them, “A speech of the greatest love, proving that Christ was more precious to them than father or mother.” It is, in fact, the kind of love a spouse has, sometimes to a fault. We say to each other: Whatever happens in your life is something that is happening in *our* life, together, and I will take your side, no matter what.

Paul follows Jesus in quoting Genesis on marriage, saying: “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.” Then Paul adds: “This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.”

The Fathers of the Church took this analogy very literally: The Church, and each Christian, is the bride and Christ is the bridegroom. As Theodore of Cyrus (393-458/466) wrote, “Just as Eve was fashioned from Adam, so were we from Christ the Lord. We are buried with him in baptism. We rise with him. We eat and drink his blood.”

When we unite with him in communion, we are the bride receiving the body of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom. The Old Testament Song of Songs is a love poem that spells out just what this marriage looks like, with us longing for Jesus Christ, and the Lord longing to be united with us.

Just as a man “leaves” his parents and “cleaves” to his wife, Jesus the Bridegroom *leaves* his Father’s house in the incarnation and *cleaves* with us in the Eucharist, becoming one flesh.

And, like brides, we *leave* our former family to make Christ our highest priority. And from the Early Church on, Christians have said that “Any soul that *cleaves* faithfully to Christ is like a wife living faithfully with her husband.”

And what an amazing husband. He loves us more than himself, St. Paul says: He “handed himself over” to save us, and in baptism “cleanses us by the bath of water with the word” in order to restore his bride’s beauty “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing” to be “holy and without blemish.”

So, this is what Jesus offers us in the Eucharist. And now, we have a decision to make. In the First Reading, Joshua gathers the tribes of Israel together in the Promised Land which the Israelites have just conquered. Joshua is a new Moses. He knows man is made for worship, and if we don’t worship God, something else will become our god. Today is his version of the offer Moses made when he said: “I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life, in order that you may live.”

Joshua tells the people they will have to either serve the Lord or they will find themselves in thrall to the pitiless gods of the world who are dealers of death. Then Joshua makes his choice: “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” His conviction is contagious. The people rally and do the same. The same thing happens when Peter says “Master, to whom shall we go? ... You are the Holy One of God.” Peter’s faith is contagious too, and rallies the Twelve — except for one. That one chooses money over Christ. In 21st century America, where the false gods of money, pleasure, and power beckon, and many of our neighbors and family have succumbed, God knows our family, our community, and our parish, need a new Joshua and a new Peter once again.

He has spent four weeks preparing us to answer this question.

- We can go for flashy wealth that never satisfies, or we can be the spouse of the One whose everyday providence never ends.
- We can go for easy pleasures that enslave us, or trust that the Lord brings freedom.
- We can chase the worldly power that leaves us exhausted, or enter into the slow subtle power of eternal life.
- Our Exodus begins with eating the flesh of the Lamb of God.

This Sunday in the communion line our “Amen” means what Joshua said: “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

And now I can complete the rhyme I invented to keep these five weeks straight in my head.

I offered verses 1-4 before, each verse corresponding with the themes of the first four weeks in Jesus’s own Eucharistic Congress. Here is how it finishes:

1. What we give, he multiplies.
2. With his works, he testifies.
3. With his flesh, he fortifies.
4. In his Church, he sanctifies.

5. So join the one who never dies.

At Communion time today, tell him your answer and join his great effort to banish the powers of death and return the world to the Kingdom it was intended to be.