

Bulletin Reflection 2021.08.22. Year B1. Week 21. Ordinary Time.

To whom shall we go?

Despite witnessing his marvels with their own eyes, the crowd chose not to go with Jesus after his teaching on the Holy Eucharist and the Real Presence. Compare this with Peter's profession of faith: "Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe." But if Peter was right and Christ was indeed the one and only path to eternal life, where was the majority headed to instead? Back to those who offered much of the same – the Pharisees, the scribes, Caesar, etc. By comparison, in our age of cultural atheism, as society and its people consciously reject Christ, they can only turn to worldly authority for life.

Despite the sweet illusion of individual autonomy, truth remains, that we still depend on information to make a personal decision. Consequently, those who have the power to gather, provide and shape the narrative (e.g. governments, media, etc) assume reign over the average citizen who has no option but to rely on these. Alas, unlike God, people are far from being perfectly trustworthy and honest. The words of the Psalmist rings ever so true, as he counsels: "Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish." (Ps 146:3-4) The pandemic is just one example of how chaos and confusion inevitably ensue whenever man, rather than God, is primarily put in charge of life or death.

Yet the Jews in the Gospel as well as many in our own world have chosen to entrust themselves to the worldly powers-that-be rather than the Eternal Sovereign. Well, how is that working out? Admittedly, though, this decision would be reasonable if there was nothing beyond death. After all, Peter said Jesus had the words of 'eternal' life. So if there is life after death, it would be foolish not to follow Jesus the Son of God. However, if – as non-believers claim – death had the final word, it would be pointless to follow Jesus of Nazareth. For if death was our absolute end, the Cross would be nothing more than a senseless contradiction. Likewise, it would be absurd to follow and imitate the Crucified Lord unless the reward is greater than the sacrifice. Hence, the suffering of the Cross is worthwhile insofar as the joy of Resurrection trumps it. The Lord verified this on Calvary, as God in His infinite wisdom chose what our human intellect alone would reject. Then he confirmed it by his glorious Resurrection, which was also revealed to be our final reward.

Therefore, faith not only has to do with God, but with our own self-identity. Are we mere earthlings or transcendental beings destined for eternity? That may answer our ultimate question about what it is we ought to look for. Are we looking for an abundance of earthly life, like having our fill of bread (C.f. Jn 6:26) or other worldly delights? If so, all the best with Caesar! But if we are looking for life beyond this world, then to whom shall we go than Jesus Christ, who alone has the words of eternal life?