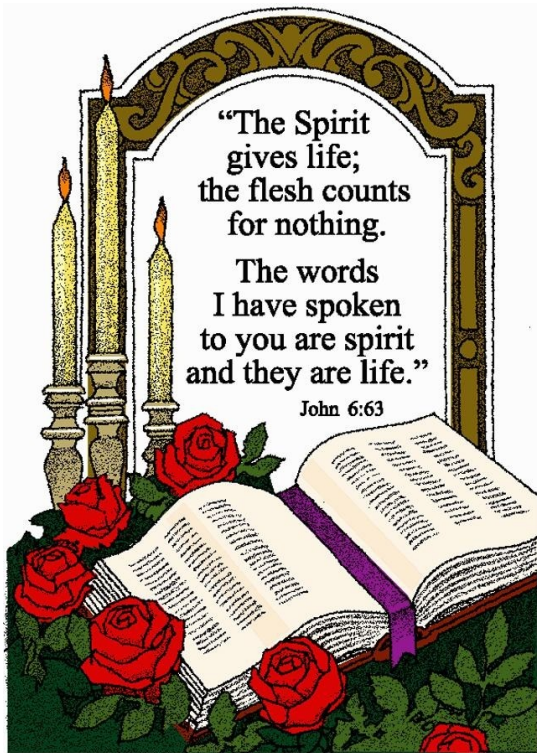


Love and Fidelity, Freely Given



The readings for this Sunday reveal a characteristic of God. **God wants our love and fidelity only if it is freely given.** Forced love is not really love at all. Let's take time to reflect on God's gift of free will to each of us and on the meaning of our free will...

In the first reading, we learn of Joshua's leadership. Joshua became the leader of God's chosen people after the death of Moses. Joshua addresses the people and asks them to make a conscious decision whether to be **covenant** people or whether to follow other gods. Joshua tells them his decision:

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

After thinking, the people **remember** God's blessings in the Exodus and resolve to choose again their covenant with God.

In the second reading, Paul shows the extent of Christ's love for his Church. He uses a beautiful comparison. The marriage bond signifies the union between Christ and his Church. By our Baptism we are graced with the potential to choose fidelity daily. Let us reflect on Christ's love for each of us. Let us choose to respond faithfully and freely.

Today's Gospel talks about the followers of Jesus who turned away when faith was difficult. During the early ministry of Jesus, thousands of people followed him to see the wonders, be fed where loaves and fishes were multiplied, to hear words of liberation. When faith became difficult, many turned away. Today, those who are faithful turn to Jesus in good times and hard times. Jesus turned to his Apostles and said:

"Do you also want to leave?"

He speaks to us too. Peter's answer echoes in the hearts of the faithful:

***"Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life..."***

The words of Jesus are "**Spirit and Life.**" The Lord assures us that we do not walk the faith journey alone. It's comforting to realize that faith is not attained only by our personal effort. The action of the Holy Trinity draws us, graces us, and invites our cooperation.

The people of the Parish of the Holy Cross offer us so many examples of strong faith through the good and hard times in life. We hear of the heroic faith of those who have passed through the crucible of suffering. Their testimony is that they received the grace of God and the loving support from people in the parish. Let us continue to love God and each other freely and faithfully.

The Pastoral Team