



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend's Gospel completes the Bread of Life Discourse. The discourse ends with the disciples – note, it wasn't the crowds, but Jesus' followers – who say, "**This saying is hard; who can accept it?**" (John 6:60). They didn't understand how it is that they can eat flesh and drink blood. These things were expressly forbidden by the *Torah*, and they didn't have the mystical understanding of Christ. Jesus doesn't back down on His words, but tries to explain to them that He is from heaven, so there is something more than cannibalism happening here.

In the end, though, the disciples leave. Jesus, turning to the twelve, invites them to leave as well. Peter steps up and says, "**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**" (John 6: 68-69). In other words, Peter says, "We don't have a clue as to how we can eat your flesh and drink your blood, but we have faith in you, we trust you, and we know that you will help us to understand.

After this, John continues: "**Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you twelve? Yet is not one of you a devil?' He was referring to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot; it was he who would betray him, one of the Twelve**" (John 6: 70-71). This part is not in the readings, but is important. Judas did not believe in the Eucharist, nor did he have the faith of Peter. Because of this total lack of faith or understanding, he should have left with the other disciples, but stays with the twelve, not for any sort of faith, but because he held the money bag. Greed motivated him, not faith, love, or trust.

These words speak to us today. Sometimes the things of faith, while never *unreasonable*, do go *beyond* our reason or understanding. Think about today's second reading ("Wives should be subordinate to their husbands" Ephesians 5:22). When we come across this difficult text or other difficult beliefs of the Church, and we might think, "I don't agree with that." We have three choices at this point.

One choice is that we reject the Scriptures or teaching of the Church. We can either say that these aren't really the revelation of God (and so deny that they reflect reality), or maybe say, "If this is who God is, I want nothing to do with Him." In this option, we, in our pride, think we know greater than God. Instead of wrestling with this hard text or belief, we think we know better, and reject it. Instead of asking for light from God, we walk away, like the vast majority of the disciples in today's Gospel.

The second option is to stay in the Church and hate it – like Judas. We reject it with our hearts and minds, but we keep going to Church for other reasons, more selfish reasons.

The third option is to be like Peter. We cry out, "Lord, I know you love me, that you made me, you know me, and you want what is best for me. Help me to understand. I struggle with this, but I know your will reflects all that is good!" In this humble stance, we study, pray, and beg God for light, to reveal to us the true meaning, the true good of this particular teaching, belief, or Scripture passage with which we struggle.

We may find that, like with the Ephesians text, it doesn't mean what we think it means. We may find that we are reacting to the teaching because we think it is demanding a change that is too much for us, but then realize that with a small death to ourselves, God gives all the grace we need... and joy and fulfillment in following His will.

May we not run from the struggle of faith! May we, rather, beg God for the courage to accept and understand all that He has revealed to us through the Sacred Scriptures and the teaching of the Church.