

August 25, 2024



SPIRIT AND LIFE

By Julie Mussché

Today's Gospel

*Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said,
"This saying is hard; who can accept it?"
Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this,
he said to them, "Does this shock you?
What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending
to where he was before?
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.
But there are some of you who do not believe."
Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe
and the one who would betray him.
And he said,
"For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me
unless it is granted him by my Father."*

*As a result of this,
many of his disciples returned to their former way of life
and no longer accompanied him.
Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"
Simon Peter answered him, "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 6:60-69

Reflection

Today's reading is a culmination of the Gospel chapter that has been shared on Sundays over the last month. Chapter 6 is filled with mystery and wonders as Jesus commences his ministry. A recap to catch us all up: it begins with Jesus feeding the five thousand and is followed by him walking on water. Then, discovering Jesus missing after the miracle of the feeding, a quest is launched by Jesus's followers to find him. There is ambiguity surrounding his leaving and once the crowd finds him, they wonder how it is he arrived there, and ask, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" (6:25) Jesus questions the crowd's motivation for seeking him out, like a free meal, and chides them for their worldly intention. Jesus instead invites the crowd "to believe in the one he has sent." (6:29) and to seek Jesus as the bread of life. The crowd then asks for the bread of life. "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'" (6:35)

Jesus continues to expand on the bread of life, and suffice to say, things take a turn and some in the crowd begin to question what Jesus is saying. The teaching continues, the response by some growing more contentious. The clincher for some: "Jesus said to them, 'Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'" (53) Of note, the Gospel clarifies that this teaching is taking place in a synagogue in Capernaum. No doubt, many who were present were taken aback, particularly if one considers the ritual cleanliness laws prohibiting the consumption of blood with food. What we would recognize today as Jesus speaking about the Eucharist may have seemed odd and perhaps offensive to those hearing him.

Yes, we have finally arrived at today's reading and the prelude hopefully offered a context for why many of those who were following Jesus left. But the twelve stayed, faithful amid mystery, uncertainty, and established belief, trusting and holding fast to what Jesus was preaching. "You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and convinced that you are the Holy One of God." (69)



Close-Up Shot of Bible Text

By Joshua Hurricks

For Pondering

- If you have a moment to walk through and spend some time with John 6, you are invited to reflect on and contemplate the narrative and unfolding story. Imagine yourself there; perhaps one movement speaks to you. Engage your senses: what do you see, hear, feel, smell, taste?
 - What challenges you?
 - What draws you in?
 - How and where is the Spirit guiding you?
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For Prayer

A Prayer from Psalm 34

*I will extol the Lord at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.
I will glory in the Lord;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
Glorify the Lord with me;*

*let us exalt his name together.
I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.
This poor man called, and the Lord heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.
Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.*

PSALM 34:1-8

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