

**Fr. John Sassani**  
**Homily Given on August 23, 2009**  
**Twenty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**Liturgical Year B**

There are some basic lessons in life that all of us learned. I'm using the words my parents used. You'll recognize the message even if the words you heard are different. "If you want good grades, you have to study." "If you want people to respect you, you must be a person of character." Sound familiar? The message is that a previous step underlies each goal. It's about choices, choices that take us in a certain direction. We make our choices, and our choices make us.

We have been following the Gospel of John in chapter 6 for more than a month now. It starts with the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, after which Jesus talks about Himself as the true bread come down from heaven. Then He begins to prepare his disciples for the gift of the Eucharist, when bread will become His flesh, wine will become His blood, so that His followers can *abide* in Him – *remain* in Him.

This was shocking to those who heard Him. John doesn't clean it up – many of the disciples could not accept His words and left Him. This is a moment of choice for the Twelve as Jesus asks them, "Do you also want to leave?" Peter speaks for them: "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." This choice made them disciples, kept them disciples. It was a selfless choice, a choice that differentiated them from the others.

Choice leads to a certain character. The choice that Christ makes for bread to become His flesh and wine to become His blood is not idiosyncratic or frivolous. It is purposeful. It expresses His character. This is My Body, which is for you – this is My Blood, poured out for you. The Eucharist embodies Christ at the moment that His character is revealed most deeply. When we share it – choose it – it becomes our character.

St. Paul talks about how spouses embody that character in their marriage as a "sacrament" for Him and for us – living examples of who we want to become in Christ.

All of this requires choices. We hear of a basic one from the First Testament, the Book of Joshua. The ancient Israelite people dabbled in other religious worship of false gods. Joshua calls them to choose and gives them encouragement and example: "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." This is a choice like Peter's: "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

May our choice for Christ in the Eucharist help us make choices that will make us His faithful disciples.