

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

August 5, 2018

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

John 6:24-35

Option 1

“Do not work for food that perishes

but for the food that endures for eternal life.

What can we do to accomplish the works of God?”

The disciples of Jesus were hardworking people who rarely traveled far from the place of their birth. His followers from Nazareth and around the sea of Galilee were intelligent, but the extent of their knowledge was limited to their role in the family or the skill they needed for their trade. It is understandable that when Jesus spoke to them about not working for food that perishes, but rather for food that endures for eternal life, they asked how to accomplish such “works of God.” When Jesus told them that he was the “bread of life” and that those who believed in him would never hunger or thirst, they had difficulty understanding how Jesus could be “food.” It would take time for them to realize that belief in all that Jesus did and said, and imitation of Jesus, is the “food” that does not perish and the “bread of eternal life.” They would eventually sacrifice much and give all to accomplish the “works of God.” Do we understand? Do we desire the “bread of eternal life?” How are we “accomplishing the works of God.”

Option 2

“You are looking for me, not because you saw signs,

but because you ate the loaves and were filled.”

Does Jesus sound a bit harsh? Was He condemning the people pursuing Him because they wanted more bread and fish? Or was He challenging them to understand what He had done for them and what He was trying to teach them? We heard in recent Gospel passages that Jesus felt sorry for them and described them as “sheep without a shepherd” because they were burdened with strict religious laws about food, sanitation, and worship and had been taught that God was vengeful, or at least, excessively demanding. Jesus understood that they feared God more than loved Him. He taught them that God loved them and wanted them to enjoy all that God had given them, and to share what they had with others. Jesus knew it would take time for them to accept the concept of a loving God. When they asked Jesus how to “accomplish the works of God” He taught them to “believe in the one He sent” - to believe in Him and imitate Him. Do we believe in Jesus? Do we believe in a God who loves us? Do we act as though we believe?

August 12, 2018
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
John 6:41-51

Option 1

“Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother?”

Imagine that you were among the four hundred people who lived in Nazareth with Joseph, Mary and Jesus. You have known Jesus since he was a boy learning carpentry and other trades from Joseph and others in the small town, including yourself. You know that Jesus, like you, had very little education; that he learned the Torah, but had limited, if any, ability to read and write. Then, the Jesus you know says, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever.” What would you think? Would you give Jesus the opportunity to explain what he meant? Would you wait to see what Jesus did to demonstrate that he is “the living bread that came down from heaven”? In all honesty, we would probably have the same questions about Jesus. But now, we have the testimony of those who did believe in Jesus as “the living bread that came down from heaven,” going back to the Apostles. Do we learn about Jesus by frequently reading and reflecting on Scripture? How do we imitate Jesus in our life?

Option 2

“It is written in the prophets: *‘They shall all be taught by God.’*”

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a small village atop a craggy hill with approximately four hundred people who lived a simple, self sufficient, subsistence lifestyle. They had many skills, such as carpentry, smithing, masonry, and farming. They helped and learned from each other. What they could not provide for themselves they bartered their skills to obtain from nearby villages, like Cana. They all knew Jesus and he knew them. When Jesus said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven,” contrasting himself to the manna God gave to the Israelites, they questioned how that could be. They knew his parents and family, but they knew nothing of his Incarnation by the Holy Spirit, or his true nature. Jesus understood their doubt. He also knew that “*They shall all be taught by God.*” We have the testimony of the Apostles and two thousand years of people who believed in Jesus and imitated him. How strong is our belief in Jesus? Is our faith reflected in how we help and learn from each other, like the people of Nazareth?

August 19, 2018
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

John 6:41-51

Gospel Jn 6:51-58

Jesus said to the crowds: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will

have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

Option 1

Proverbs 9:1-6

“Wisdom has built her house . . . she says,

‘Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding.’”

In the Book of Proverbs, Wisdom is “she.” Wisdom challenges us to use knowledge to build our house, to grow in understanding of what we know and “forsake foolishness,” which is prudence. St. Ignatius of Loyola teaches us that prudence is not about making choosing what is safe, but choosing right over wrong, good over evil. Knowledge, understanding, wisdom and prudence are four of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that we receive at Confirmation. We also receive the Gifts of courage, to overcome fear of choosing right and good; openness to the Holy Spirit to know God’s will; and awe of the Lord for all that he has give us. In today’s Gospel [John 6:51-58] Jesus told his followers, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.” He was telling them, and us, “If you imitate me you will have all that Wisdom wants for you, and more.” Are we aware that we have received those Gifts at Confirmation? Have we been prudent to accept them? Do we have the courage to use them?

Option 2

Ephesians 5:15-20

“Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise. . .”

Wisdom requires some knowledge. But knowledge, even great knowledge, does not always lead to wisdom. Garrison Keiller observed: *True wisdom does not always come with age. Sometimes age comes alone.* True wisdom is accepting that all we have, all we are, all we ever will be, comes from God, belongs to God, and is given to us by God to be used for our own benefit and enjoyment, and for the benefit and enjoyment of others. When we use God’s gifts to us only for our own benefit and enjoyment, that can lead to self-centeredness and greed. Jesus said “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.” He was challenging his disciples, and us, to believe in him, to imitate him and to use all of God’s gifts for ourselves AND for others. God gave us free will so we could freely choose to do His will, for ourselves and for others. That is true wisdom! As age creeps up on us, hopefully wisdom will keep pace. If we truly seek to know Jesus, wisdom may even come faster than age.

August 26, 2018

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

John 6:60-69

Option 1

Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?”

Jesus attempted several times to explain to the people who were following him that they must become like him, to consume him, to imitate him, many drifted away from him. He understood that many would find that difficult to accept and would reject him. The Twelve may not have understood what Jesus was saying, but they stayed with him. Jesus gives them a chance to

express their belief in him, and ask, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter responds with a declaration of Faith, “Master, to whom shall we go?” There are many mysteries we Catholics believe are true. Through the use of Reason, assisted by Revelation and Tradition, we accept on Faith the existence of a Triune God, the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus, the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, Eternal Life for those who consume and imitate Jesus, and more. Jesus knows that the world in which we live constantly challenges our Faith and he is asking us, “Do you want to leave?” Do we leave or do we respond, “Master, to whom shall we go?”

Option 2

“Master, to whom shall we go?”

When the disciples realized that Jesus expected them to be like him, to consume him and to be consumed by him, many found that hard to accept. Some abandoned Jesus. Jesus asked his closest friends if they wanted to leave. Peter answered for those who stayed, and for us, “Master to whom shall we go?” When we realize that we are disciples of Jesus as a result of our Baptism, and that we are called to give ALL of our selves as, Jesus did, we can look to Jesus for our model and our strength. Several years ago people of all ages were wearing bracelets, pendants, hats and shirts with the letters *WWJD?* [*What Would Jesus Do?*]. That is a very important question for us to ask before we do anything. It is also important for us to constantly grow in our knowledge and understanding of *WDJD?* [*What Did Jesus Do?*]. We do that by constantly growing in our knowledge and understanding of Revelation in Scripture and Tradition, and the teaching of the Church. That is how we know *WWSD!* [*What We Should Do!*].

August 30, 2015

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Option 1

“You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition.”

Jesus was clearly not reluctant to confront the hypocrisy of the leaders of the Jewish people of his day. By his actions and harsh words Jesus challenged the many rules and restrictions imposed on the people that had nothing to do with loving God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The Jewish leaders used those rules and restrictions to maintain control over the vast majority of the people who were not ignorant, but were uneducated. They were taught to fear God and did not question the purely human dictates of their leaders. Jesus taught people about the Love of God and that a loving God would not demand of us things that are unreasonable and irrational. Jesus and his disciples ignored the minute dietary and sanitary mandates. He was not opposed to cleanliness but he boldly proclaimed that it was not what we put in our mouth that offends and hurts God. It is what comes out of our mouth as a result of what we think and feel. What comes out of our mouth?

Option 2

“Well did Isaiah prophesy about *you hypocrites.*”

When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about why He and his disciples did not follow tradition about diet and washing, He called them *hypocrites* and quoted Isaiah, “*This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as*

doctrines human precepts.” It was a stinging rebuke of the religious leaders of His day who claimed superior knowledge of God and imposed requirements on the People of God that caused them to fear God more than love Him. Jesus challenged the Pharisees to be better stewards of their influence with the people to help them grow in their relationship with God. We live in an age of incredible access to Scripture and the teaching of our Church that can help us learn about the greatness of our God and His unconditional love for us. Do we honor God with our lips, but keep our hearts far from Him? If we fail to take advantage of all that is available to help us learn what God truly expects of us, do we risk hearing Jesus say to us, *You hypocrites!*