

LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

As we conclude our reading of Chapter 6 of John's Gospel, many of those who had followed Jesus walk away. It is a "vote of no confidence" and so Jesus puts the question to his disciples, "Do you also wish to go away?"

Reading John's Gospel almost 2,000 years after it was written and in the light of the many disputes about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, we can easily misunderstand the reason many turned away. What is the teaching that is too difficult?

When Jesus spoke about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, we think of the Eucharist. However, we have seen over several weeks that there is much more to this chapter of John's Gospel.

Jesus had declared that he is the "true bread from heaven". Against the background of the Exodus story Jesus was declaring that the way to God is no longer the Torah, the Word of God revealed to Moses. The Manna had become a symbol for the Torah and so Jesus is declaring that he is true "manna", the true Way to God.

Then last Sunday when Jesus declared that he is "Bread for the life of the world", we saw that those words point not only to the Last Supper but also to his death on the Cross when he surrenders his life for the life of the world.

Paul (1 Cor 1:22) said "We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles". That is the difficult teaching.

Many who had followed Jesus wanted him to fit into their understanding of God. They turned away from Jesus because they could not accept a crucified Christ.

Whenever we gather to celebrate the Eucharist we are nourished by Jesus in the Word proclaimed and in the Communion we share. By becoming one with Jesus, we become sharers in his Mission to reveal God's love for all peoples. That also means embracing the Cross, a symbol of self-giving love for others.

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