

Theme: "AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSEHOLD, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD" – Joshua 24:15d

I wish and pray every head of the household would make this profound profession of faith like Joshua with his/her household. Whereas faith is the main theme in the first reading and the Gospel, the second reading has Christian love as its main theme. Nevertheless, unconditional love and faith are inseparable virtues for us Christians. They're true hallmarks of authentic Christian living.

After the demise of Moses, God appointed Joshua, an army commander, to succeed Moses and to lead his people to the Promised Land. Shortly upon arrival in the Promised Land, Joshua summoned their elders, leaders, judges, and officers at Shechem to make a vital decision as to whom they and their households would worship. Joshua says to them: "If it does not please you to serve the Lord, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are dwelling."

Joshua did not hesitate at all to declare his stance for his household: "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." – Joshua 24:15d

The leaders of Israel decided to follow the true God who liberated them from Egyptian slavery and brought them to the Promised Land. He is the true God that their ancestors worshipped and not foreign gods. They and their families would also worship him.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus, unlike Joshua, did not coerce his disciples to decide who they would follow. Remember, the Gospel reading is the conclusion of Jesus' discourse on the Bread of Life that we have been reading for the past few Sundays. If you would recall during this past Sunday's readings, many of Jesus' followers found it very difficult to accept or believe that he is the Bread of Life. In today's Gospel reading, many of his disciples again found his teaching hard to accept. He shocked them more when he said, "What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?"

As many of his disciples were leaving and returning to their former ways, he then asked the Twelve: "Do you also want to leave?" Peter then made one of the profound and the greatest professions of faith recorded in the Gospel. Peter said to Jesus, "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."

Beloved, Peter made a personal profession of faith based on his personal experience of God. He witnessed Jesus raising the dead back to life, feeding over five thousand with five loaves of

bread and two fish, expelled demons, etc. Indeed, Jesus has words of eternal life, and he is the Holy One of God.

Could we also make a personal profession of faith in Jesus? Faith handed over to you can't bear fruit if you don't personalize it. Someone says, "Secondhand faith is not an authentic faith."

Gandhi put it beautifully: "A knowledge of religion, as distinguished from experience, seems but chaff in moments of trial."

In the second reading, St. Paul challenged the culture of his time that was not in accordance with the Gospel. During his time, husband was the head of the household. All members of the family were subordinate to the father/husband. In this second reading, St. Paul admonished the Ephesian Christian community and the future Christian communities that Christian marriage must be rooted in mutual love and respect. Christian marriage must reflect the relationship that Christ has with his Church. He says a husband must love his wife just as Christ loves the Church. There can't be any meaningful Christian marriage if both the husband and wife are unwilling to sacrifice for one another.

Let us pray that like Joshua and Peter, we also would make a personal profession of faith in Jesus no matter the storms we might or would be going through. Jesus does not abandon us, so let us always get closer to him.

May Mother Mary and her beloved husband St. Joseph continue to intercede for us as we strive to lead a holy life.

