

St Pius-St Anthony 21st Sunday Ordinary Time Year B

I am embarrassed to ask this question (I know I'll hear, "Well, of course Father Obvious") But how else can I bring this point up? Here it is: Have you ever been misunderstood? I'm sure you say now 'Welcome to life!' I am talking about those times when you know what you said, you know what you meant, and they are the same. But what was taken by the other person was something else altogether? For example, a lady was telling me about some wondrous events that happened on their family vacation- chance encounters like going all the way to California and eating in a restaurant and running into neighbors from down their street, or receiving miracles like being saved at the bell such as losing then finding their bank debit card at a store. I responded to her, "I can't believe that". And she was offended saying, 'Well, I'm not lying about it'. So "I had to quickly rescue the conversation adding, 'Oh I know you and believe you, I'm just adding my shock to how miraculously that went down for you all.' Or how about such a typical response open to wide misinterpretation as this KY saying: I might ask, "Would you pick that box up for me?" & you say back, "I don't care to"

Well, I think our gospel has a moment of clarification like this, because after Jesus had been teaching (John Chap 6) about Himself being the living bread come down from heaven, meant to feed His people with His own body-blood (that His flesh and blood are real food and drink-6:55), Well, people in crowd first began to squirm, then grumble, then question, and then flat out leave Him over it. I suggest they are completely misunderstanding discipleship, belief and who Jesus is! So, I find that Jesus takes the opportunity to ask his own closest disciples what they want to do- Do they know and accept Him, take His words as they are, or not?" Peter steps up to give voice for faithful followers staying with Him, by responding, "You have the words of eternal life--Your word is true, your Word Jesus will make it happen-I believe in you-I am with you."

My point is that I am always shocked by those who leave Jesus here (reading even says they were once disciples- they had been that committed before). They think Jesus has gone too far in his speech, or is asking them to believe/accept too much by talking of feeding them with his own life? But I have to ask, "They were with him right? When he cured the blind man, made the crippled man walk, raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, walked on water (calmed seas), and fed five thousand with five loaves & two fish? What is this teaching alongside all of those miracles? In all those cases, it is

also Jesus' Word and the power of Holy Spirit that makes all things happen. And they don't believe?

To me this gospel conversation reminds me of those exchanges when you ask something big (you think so) of someone and they respond 'Oh sure, I'll do that: not any problem at all'. Maybe I call and say, "I have a big favor to ask, could you look up so and so's address for me and deliver these boxes to them?' They respond, "'Whew, Can Do for sure, but you scared me at first asking that way, I thought you were going to ask me to paint the kitchen or give a speech.'" Something we think is a 'big asking', the other person answers, 'Easy- consider it done'. I remember remarking one time to a band director after an excellent field performance, 'That was an awesome set-it was flawless-I heard all the instruments, the movements were so smooth and graceful-What a monumental task-that performance you pulled off'. But he said, 'No, today was easy-a cakewalk, the **monumental part** was getting all the band members to show up for practices each day (I had to call them, and call them) and then for them to study-learn routines-working together to keep formation: that was the victory success."

What I am suggesting here (I am amazed at the departing disciples) is that to stay with Jesus (not leave him) and accept His teaching about what He would do for us (feed us with His Body & Blood). Does not seem like such a major hurdle for belief, alongside other acts-teachings of Christ. For example, Jesus didn't say, "You have to be able to explain my real presence fully, and give an exact cause to others-that is what belief is." How does this teaching break the deal for them? I find much harder teachings given by Jesus at other times. Here Jesus is performing all the work, we simply have to believe. It is Jesus speaking, It is his word, I believe His Word can make anything happen, whatever it is. He says, 'My Body' 'My Blood', I say 'Yes I believe you'. And this summarizes what Peter says here: "You have the words of everlasting life (6:68)-Jesus-you above all, can make this happen." And He does. I am just amazed the crowd thinks this saying is his hardest.

There are much more difficult sayings of Jesus. Some rainy day I want to make a top ten list of the hardest sayings of Jesus. I find many, more challenging-difficult sayings of Him, to accept and practice. How about Matthew 5:44, "Love your enemies, and pray for your persecutors" or Matthew 18:2 "Forgive a sinning brother, not seven times but seventy-seven times." or Luke 6:27 "Do good to those who hate you..." Luke 6:30 'Give to everyone who asks...' Or Matthew 25:45 "Whatever you did not do for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did not do for me.' Or even

Luke 9:23 “anyone wishes to come after me (come after me into heaven-resurrection), he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow” We can go on and on, because who has handled this one from Luke 18:22 when Jesus tells an otherwise righteous young rabbi “there’s still one thing left for you to do: sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” So when does it end? Jesus always challenges us. He wants us to grow with Him, which is all the more reason to simply stay with Him and be fed by Him through receiving Him and His word. I accept His word and work at understanding Him better. That is faith. We all do that when we tell Jesus like Peter did over this deep teaching on His Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist , ‘Jesus, you said it, I believe it and I believe you, can make it happen.”