

In today's first reading, Joshua challenges the people of Israel. Make up your minds once and for all, he tells them. "If you will not serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve." It is decision time.

In today's Gospel, Jesus puts a similar challenge to his followers. Because of his teaching about the Living Bread, many of his followers turned their backs on him. They found his teaching too hard to stomach. They walked away. So Jesus asks the Twelve, "Do you wish to go away too?"

This is not simply a question from history. Jesus puts it to each of us today also: "Do you wish to go away too? Are you sick of my teaching about the Living Bread? Are you fed up with my talk about forgiving your enemies? Are my statements about justice and honesty too much for you? Are you turned off when I take the side of the marginalised? Are you embarrassed by the cross? Is the command to turn the other cheek a little OTT?"

It's decision time. It always is. Do you wish to go away, too? Or do you wish to stay? Either way, why?

Before you answer, listen to the answers of the Israelites to Joshua and of the twelve apostles to Jesus. The Israelites say: "There is no way that we will forsake the Lord to serve other gods. Look at all God has done for us." And Peter takes it on himself to answer for the apostles: "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and we know that you are the Holy One of God."

## WHY I STAY

It seems that every year, more and more people are walking away from the Church, and for a variety of reasons. Some, due to their sexuality or domestic situation, do not feel welcome; others feel betrayed by the long litany of Church scandals; still others have been hurt by a priest or religious; some feel excluded by the Church's clericalism and misogyny; some have simply lost the faith. Today's Gospel offers an opportunity to

think about why we choose to stay when so many others have not. There are three main reasons why I choose to remain in the Church.

First, and most important, is the person of Jesus Christ. For me, Jesus is the one who gives life meaning. For me, Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life – literally. For me, life makes sense only because God's Son took on flesh like mine and died on a cross to save me from oblivion. In the difficult times, when scandals threaten to overwhelm me, I always try to distinguish between Jesus and his Church, which is made up of fallible human beings. Even when the Church lets me down, Jesus never lets me down. Even when the Church disappoints, Jesus never disappoints. We should never let the failures of the Church cut us off from Jesus.

Second, I stay because of the example of so many people who by their lives of love and service show me the meaning of Christianity. People like Fr Peter McVerry, who out of love God and neighbour, has devoted his life to caring for the young homeless of Dublin and elsewhere. People like 27-year-old American Jean Donovan who was martyred in El Salvador 40 years ago. She knew she was putting her life at risk by remaining in that war-ravaged country, but she stayed there anyway. She stayed out of love of God and God's people. She followed Jesus even to the cross.

Third, I stay because of the consoling knowledge that we are a Church of sinners. I'm not perfect. Despite my best efforts, I fail all the time. I can be moody and hard to live with. But I look around, and I see this is something we all have in common in the church from the top down – we are all frail, fragile, broken people, who sin and fail, and sin and fail again. But I know that, even despite my failures, despite the Church's failures, God loves me – loves us – anyway, and that God will never abandon me. God is always on my side, and with God always on my side, there is no good reason why I should walk away. ■

# StouSpace

SERIES: POINTERS ON THE JOURNEY

Season colour: GREEN

In this series, Gerard Moloney, C.Ss.R reflects on the Gospel in the context of today.

WILL I STAY?  
OR  
WILL I GO?



Today's Gospel offers an opportunity to think about why we choose to stay in the Church when so many others have not.



## Today's readings

Joshua 24:1-2.15-17.18

Eph 5:21-32

Jn 6:60-69

## GOD'S WORD TODAY

Today's Gospel challenges us to think about our faith, why we go to church, why we have said "yes" to the deal Jesus offers us. It challenges us to be able to say with Peter from the depths of our hearts, "You are the Holy One of God. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. To whom else could we go?"



# Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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## 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2021

### The Prophets

#### Haggai

The Temple is to be rebuilt, but will the people neglect it and take care of themselves first. There is no Jewish King, will the new leader lead the people in purity and dedication to God. If the people create a new home for God, the new Temple, he will create a new home with them and within them.

#### Zechariah

This book is like Isaiah, there are two parts, the first is in the early years of the return from exile, the second from the late fourth century.

The first contains a simple message:

‘Return to me and I will return to you’.

The second is a call to live up to the demands of the covenant, God has kept his side, will the people do the same.

There are references to the shepherd being sold for thirty pieces of silver and the scattering of the sheep when the shepherd is stuck.

The apostles left Jesus along and the Temple leaders paid for Jesus’ betrayal.

Yet there is a promise of a new age, when God will be King of the whole world.

#### Joel

The Lord calls on the people to return to me with fasting, weeping and mourning.

Yet the return is to be with a sincere heart, not empty gestures.

This reading is used on Ash Wednesday.

#### Collections

Dromara  
Drumgooland

#### Parish

£227  
£868

#### Weekend masses

Sat 6:00pm Dechomet  
7:30pm Leitrim  
Sun 9:00am Gargory  
11:00am Dromara

#### Anniversary Masses

##### Dechomet

Sat 21<sup>st</sup> Agnes Rooney  
Sat 28<sup>th</sup> Timothy Doyle

##### Leitrim

Sat 21<sup>st</sup> Bernard Cunningham  
Sat 28<sup>th</sup> Shane, Barney and Winnie Owens

##### Gargory

Sun 22<sup>nd</sup> Michael, Brigid, Leonard and  
Liam King

##### Dromara

Sun 22<sup>nd</sup> Elizabeth McCoubry (Derry)  
Alice Lundy and Deceased Members of  
McCann and Mageen Families  
Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Seamus and Betty McEvoy and  
Deceased Family Members  
Sun 29<sup>th</sup> Daniel Hughes (Derry)  
Eileen and Peter O’Hare and Deceased  
Family Members  
Molly, Tom and Padraig McMullan and  
Moira Grogan

#### Weekday masses

Mon 9:00am Leitrim  
7:30pm Dechomet  
Tues 9:00am Dromara  
Wed 7:30pm Leitrim  
Fri 7:30pm Dromara

#### Drumgooland St Vincent de Paul

Are you experiencing difficulties and  
need a helping hand?

Contact us in confidence on 075 8644 7427