

**HOMILY ~ AUGUST 21/22, 2021
21st Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**THERE WAS A MAN
A LONELY MAN
WHO LOST HIS LOVE
THROUGH HIS INDIFFERENCE
A HEART THAT CARED
THAT WENT UNSHARED
UNTIL IT DIED
WITHIN HIS SILENCE
AND SOLITAIRE'S THE ONLY
GAME IN TOWN
AND EVERY ROAD THAT TAKES HIM
'TAKES HIM DOWN
WHILE LIFE GOES ON
AROUND HIM EVERYWHERE
HE'S PLAYING SOLITAIRE**

That is what happens when we remain indifferent in our relationships. If we cannot commit, we end up alone playing solitaire. We hear in the Second Reading today some controversial words that people tend to focus on: *“Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord.”* We also hear: *“Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the Church.”* We also hear: *“Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.”* In reality, if two people are truly committed to one another in a marriage, sometimes wives have to be subordinate to their husbands. When your husband needs to move to another state to advance his career, sometimes the wife needs to move with him. Sometimes husbands have to love their wives as Christ loves the Church, with that sacrificial love, and forgo that promotion for the good of the family. That is how you hold a marriage together. The truth is that in all of our close relationships, we need to commit to one another and be subordinate to one another at times for the good of the relationship. Otherwise you may end up playing solitaire.

In the First Reading, the people of Israel had lost their sense of commitment to the Lord. Joshua tells them that they have to decide who they are going to serve. The people looked at how the Lord had served them in the past and decided that they were going to serve the Lord, for he was their God. I think we are challenged today to answer that same question. Who or what are we going to serve?

Sometimes we get side tracked. Instead of being committed to the Lord, we become committed to careers, or money, or possessions, or a particular group or political party. If we are committed to the Lord first, all of those other commitments fall into place.

In the Gospel Reading today, the people were committed to Jesus as long as he was healing the sick, feeding the multitudes, and turning water into wine, until things got hard. Jesus told the people about the Eucharist, eating his body and drinking his blood. This seemed like cannibalism to the people; and this was hard to accept, so many left. Jesus asked the 12, are you going to leave me, too? Peter responds: ***“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.”*** Can you say the same thing when things get hard, when things do not seem to make any sense? Can you just trust that God is God and we are not? Can we trust God to work with us and care for us? Can we stay committed to Jesus Christ first and foremost in our lives? If we are really committed to Jesus, we have to try and love and serve him by loving and serving one another. That is really hard at times, and I frequently fail; but I am committed to Jesus and I will keep trying.

We are going through a really difficult time right now with COVID. I am really angry and disappointed that we cannot go back to normal. I think most of us are longing to get back to normal. I wonder why God does not just solve this problem for us, but I also remember that God is God and I am not. My inclination is to judge others, blame a particular group of people or to scapegoat a group. It is their fault. But blaming and shaming is not going to help this problem. What do we need to do now? How can we love and serve one another? I do not want to start wearing the mask again in large indoor groups; but I think I am going to put the mask back on, at least for a while, until we all figure this out. How about you? Are you committed to Jesus even in this time when it is really hard? How are you called to love and serve the Lord by loving and serving one another?

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim