**21st Sunday of Ordinary Time (Cycle B) Homily**

**Saint William, Champion | August 22, 2021**

**Jos 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b | Eph 5:21-32 | Jn 6:60-69**

Back in 2005, the office supply store chain Staples premiered an innovative ad campaign. They didn’t have any expensive spokesperson or radical new concept. It was just a simple button… but a quite powerful one. And it was easy enough for anyone to use. It was a large red button, about three inches in diameter, with one word in text that almost anybody could read: “easy”. Fast forward about sixteen years, and it’s been one of the most successful marketing campaigns ever. Staples actually made and sold millions of these buttons. What did they do? Well, in real life, actually nothing, other than say the words, “That was easy.” But the commercials were great. They featured somebody with a large problem, and when they pressed the easy button, just like that, their problem was solved.

Part of our human condition is that we love things that make our lives easy. You can see examples all around you. At the store, there are all the foods that are ready to eat or drink with little or next to no work. Just pop it in the microwave for a minute, or add water, and it’s ready to go. Or just pull up to our convenient drive through window… you don’t even have to get out of your car. Or use our convenient mobile application to access your account or place an order. I remember hearing stories where a young child actually used Mom or Dad’s cell phone and purchased toys… maybe they made things a little too easy.

Our readings and Gospel today all tell us of the choices we make. In our first reading, Joshua challenges the people of Israel: decide today who you will serve. The people respond, “We will serve the Lord.” But within a very short time, once Joshua is gone, they all go astray. In our second reading, St. Paul talks about the relationship of us as Church with our God, using the analogy of the marriage relationship. In our modern day society, we know that many marriage vows don’t mean all that much as people slip in and out of marriage. Finally, we get to our Gospel, where after Jesus has fed all those following him and taught them at length, they step back and say, “This is too hard for us.” Most of them desert Jesus, and so he turns to his closest friends and disciples, offering them the same option to leave. St. Peter responds with the words, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life.”

Perhaps today we might look at ourselves and our relationship with Christ. But maybe it’s easier, for a moment, to consider three models to establish a reference. I’m sure we can think of people who have a very shallow faith. Their relationship is strictly based on what is easy. When church teaching challenges them, or calls them to live up to a commitment, they drop everything, or maybe they slowly drift away… Then there are others, who have a very rigid view of how things should be, and when the Church doesn’t conform to their idea of how things should be, they check out. Finally, there are those who sincerely cling to their faith, despite the challenges that life throws at them and how they are tested. For them, faith is a lifelong learning experience, as they struggle to understand its meaning and live it in their daily lives. They echo the words of our first reading – “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

I think that for many people, our faith journey is a road with bumpy patches and some smooth stretches. After all, Jesus never said that it would be easy. But he did tell us that we would be able to make it to our destination, and he provided us with companions on our journey to inspire and support us along the way. May we always strive to make the best decisions in living out our faith, always remembering that there is no real “easy” button.