



Aug. 26, 2018 John 6: 60-69 & Jos. 24: 1-2a, 15-17, 18b

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Stone, Naomi. [Create With Me.](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Unquiet of the Frontiers.....](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[Many Disciples Leave Jesus](#)

**ENTERING THE SCENE:**

Imagine having to decide day by day if you will go to be with Jesus again today. Your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers think you are going off the deep end risking everything and putting them in danger too. The authorities are watching. They have noticed you at Jesus's side a lot and you have a target on your back. You might even be grateful for Jesus' giving you a way out by pushing you so far today. You stagger home to the "I told you so's" relieved to finally have your hope fling over. Things settle down at home, but your dreams are anything but settled. Somehow you know deep in your soul you have betrayed your own truth. The question now is, what do you do now?

**Jn. 6: 60-69**

60 On hearing it, many of his **disciples** said, "This is a hard **teaching**. Who can **accept** it?" 61 Aware that his **disciples** were **grumbling** about this, Jesus said to

them, "Does this **offend** you? 62 What if you see the Son of Man **ascend** to where he was before! 63 The **Spirit** gives **life**; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are **spirit** and they are **life**. 64 Yet there are some of you who do not **believe**." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not **believe** and who would **betray** him. 65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can **come to me** unless the **Father** has enabled him." 66 From this time many of his **disciples turned back** and no longer followed him. 67 You do not want to **leave** too, do you?" Jesus asked the **Twelve**. 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the **words of eternal life**. 69 We **believe** and know that you are the **Holy One of God**"

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** The challenges posed by following Jesus are getting too hard. Am I one of those who left, or am I staying?

**PRAYER:** Teacher Jesus, you have come to the moment now of helping me choose to stay or go. If I am attracted to your teaching and ministry I will have to stretch beyond my comfort level and even my ability to understand my choice. Like the disciples of long ago I might also have to resort to "Lord to whom shall I go?" In effect saying there is nothing better out there. But you can work with this meager bit of faith, so I will press on with you. Help me to keep on keeping on. Amen

**WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:**

**FATHER:** The father of a family stood next in line with God in the power structure of Jesus' day. He had absolute authority to make decisions for himself and his family, conditioned only by the laws of God.

*Does the role of Father help or hinder your understanding of God?*

**TEACHING:** Jesus' words excited new life in the hearts of those who listened to him about God.

*Is there anything about these words today that excites new life in your heart about God?*

**SYNAGOGUE:** The synagogue was the local place to pray and learn about God.

*How does your place of worship enable you to pray and learn about God in a way that differs from other places?*

**CAPERNAUM:** Capernaum now becomes the place where Jesus finishes his Galilean mission. It is where he sets the conditions for continuing on with him.

*Can you remember a place where you had to make a final decision to stay the same or to move on? What feelings do you remember about that place?*

**DISCIPLES:** There were many who followed Jesus up to this time that were known as disciples, or someone who was studying under a teacher and this is the moment many 'dropped out' of his classes. (See information below on discipleship)

*Have you ever 'dropped out' of one of Jesus' classes? Did you ever choose to take it again at a later time?*

**ACCEPT:** Those who ‘dropped out’ did so because they could not accept what he was saying about himself and God.

*Is there anything in this text that you find terribly hard to accept?*

**GRUMBLING:** In some translations the word arguing is used here. Both words imply that the people were not happy or in agreement about what are being said.

*Is there anything about this text that causes you to grumble or argue?*

**OFFEND:** Jesus’ words offend the people, and they in response fend him off. Sir Isaac Newton said; “to every action there is an equal reaction”.

*Why do you think the people were offended, not just simply confused?*

**ASCEND:** Jesus, the Incarnation of God, descended and became part of our space and time. He now talks of the time when he will ascend once again.

*Do you think you could have stayed with the twelve or would you have gone too?*

**SPIRIT:** Flesh alone cannot bring full understanding. Spirit, God’s Spirit, is what can bring that understanding to completion.

*How is God’s Spirit working in you today to bring you to full understanding?*

**BELIEVE:** Sometimes we can move forward only by taking something/someone on trust.

*What do you think got in the way of those who chose to leave? What could they not believe?*

**BETRAY:** Eventually Jesus would be handed over to those who wanted him dead.

*Have you ever ‘betrayed’ Jesus by not being strong enough to stand with him in a time of choosing?*

**COME TO ME:** Jesus knew that the Father was the source of all faith. In fact, they were there because God was drawing them to him.

*How is God drawing you to God’s self? What in this gospel that draws you to God?*

**TURNED BACK / LEAVE:** Many turned back and left in this moment of choice.

*Do you think any of them reconsidered their choice after the Pentecost?*

**TWELVE:** Twelve being the number of completion and indicates that enough stayed with Jesus in order to go on.

*What do you need now to be able to continue on from here in your faith life?*

**ETERNAL LIFE:** Eternal life, life without end, is the goal of the people’s search.

*Is this also your goal as you meditate on these words?*

**HOLY ONE OF GOD:** Early on, the demons identify Jesus as the Holy One of God (Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34). Now finally, the disciples accept this truth as well.

*What needs to happen for you to accept this truth more fully today?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** **Jn. 6:63** // Jn. 3:6; **Jn. 6: 65** // Jn. 6:37, 44; **Jn. 6:69** // Jn. 11:27; Mt. 16:16-17;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Jos. 24: 1-2, 15-18; [Ps. 34: 2-3, 16-23](#); Eph. 5:21-32; Jn. 60-69;

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Kings 8:1,6,10-11, 22-30, 41-43; [Ps. 84](#); Eph. 6:10-20; Jn. 56-69;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

God is always choosing people. First impressions aside, God is not primarily choosing them for a role or a task, although it might appear that way. God is really choosing them to be God’s self in this world, each in a unique situation. If they allow themselves to experience being chosen, being a beloved, being somehow God’s presence in the world, they invariably communicate that same chosenness to others. And thus the Mystery passes on from age to age. Yes, we do have roles and tasks in this world, but finally they are all the same—to uniquely be divine love in a way that no one else can or will.

Richard Rohr: Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality, pp. 42-43

Our hearts and minds desire clarity. We like to have a clear picture of a situation, a clear view of how things fit together, and clear insight into our own and the world's problems. But just as in nature colors and shapes mingle without clear-cut distinctions, human life doesn't offer the clarity we are looking for. The borders between love and hate, evil and good, beauty and ugliness, heroism and cowardice, care and neglect, guilt and blamelessness are mostly vague, ambiguous, and hard to discern. It is not easy to live faithfully in a world full of ambiguities. We have to learn to make wise choices without needing to be entirely sure. Henri Nouwen

Let me not forget that in choosing you I have chosen to walk in mystery, to live neither in heaven nor on earth, but in you, that mysterious place that is my home. Rumi

On a path, two great crises await you. The first comes when the magic of the beginning has vanished. The second comes just before the goal. Both ask the question: Do you really want this? Gernot Candolini, *Labyrinths: Walking Toward the Center*

When we turn away in coldness from someone or something we once loved, perhaps even from God and religion, we usually do so out of hurt, wounded pride, out of the need to protect ourselves and keep our dignity intact. [Fr. Rolheiser](#)

Peter's response translated into Mediterranean cultural values is: we have made a commitment to you, no matter what ("we have believed"). Identifying Jesus as the "Holy One of God" echoes the Old Testament use of this phrase to identify men consecrated to God. Samson was so described (Judg 13:7; 16:7), as was Aaron (Ps 106:16). In John 10:36, Jesus describes himself as "the one whom the Father made holy;" and in John 17:19, Jesus says, "It is for them [my disciples] that I make myself holy."

Peter thinks he speaks for the Twelve, but Jesus knows better. Actually, any Mediterranean person would know better. In the Mediterranean world, allegiance between each member of a faction and its leader is strong. The leader has recruited each member personally and individually.

But the allegiance between faction members is very weak. If they know each other at all, it is only superficially. They have no in-depth psychological insight into other persons. Moreover, they could care less about the other faction members. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approach Jesus to seek higher honors than the other ten when Jesus enters into the fullness of his rightful honor (Mark 10: 37). The others become understandably indignant (an understatement in view of the typical Mediterranean penchant for venting emotions).

Jesus' observation that one of the Twelve is "a devil" may well have come from the hand of the editor who adds his after-the-fact comment: "He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him." Mediterranean people generally judge others only on externals (see 1 Sam 16:7). Pilch, John J. [The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle B](#). Collegeville, MN. The Liturgical Press. 1996. Page 128

I'm not just talking about having a powerful spiritual experience; I'm talking about a permanent, irrevocable, vertical leap in our own emotional, psychological, ethical, philosophical, and spiritual development. When we no longer want to resist our own Authentic Self's natural inclination to evolve, we will begin to transcend those structures in the separate self that limit us. And we will also awaken to a sense of spiritual buoyancy, a lightness of being, because we have finally ceased to resist in a fundamental way and that's what changes everything. Andrew Cohen

Infinite in its longings to know and encounter, to be known and to be met, this "Yes" – this heart – recognizes all forms, all images as but passing likenesses, way-stations, on the infinite journey of the metamorphosis of the Complete Human. It knows that any other way is idolatry. Pg. 46. Bamford, Christopher. *The God of Abraham*. Parabola. 6/08/

What we are being asked "to eat" is that other part of his body, the community, the flawed body of believers here on earth. In essence, Jesus is saying: You cannot deal with a perfect all-loving, all-forgiving, all-understanding God in heaven, if you cannot deal with a less-than-perfect, less-than-forgiving, and less-than-understanding community here on earth. You cannot pretend to be dealing with an invisible God if you refuse to deal with a visible family. Teaching this truth can ruin one's popularity in a hurry. People then found it to be "intolerable language" and it meets with the same resistance today. Rolheiser, Ronald. [The Holy Longing](#). NY. Doubleday. 1999.

Jesus knew well wherof he spoke when he promised "Anyone who eats this bread will live forever." This bread of renewing and revitalizing our lives. This bread of never ceasing to search for deeper and deeper meaning in our happiness and in our hurts. This bread of being attentive as we make the daily decisions which prepare us to make the larger ones. This bread of welcoming the beauty and goodness of life as it is revealed in nature. This bread of being involved in our lives as they are sometimes broken and poured out for others. This bread of embracing the mystery of life and this wonders revealed as it unfolds.

To "eat this bread" requires the kind of courage of which Robert Louis Stevenson spoke: "The world has no room for cowards. We must be ready to toil, to suffer, to die. And yours is not less noble because no drum beats when you go out to your daily battlefields, as no crowds shout when you return from your daily victory and defeat."

Ripple, Paula. [Growing Strong at Broken Places](#). Notre Dame, IN. Ave Maria Press. 1971.

Real life comes to be itself precisely in moving beyond the limits of control and certainty. Trust is integral to real life. We have an inner need to trust, to believe, to live in a mutual recognition with others. Interdependency cannot happen without it. This interdependency is energized by the unpredictable and new which occurs when separate beings merge and form a new reality. This is life which comes to itself beyond the predictable, secure, and controllable. Fr. David Bock

The love we celebrate and reinforce in the Eucharist, however, is not easy. No love is ever easy, because the attractive, repellant powers involved in love are so powerful. We are drawn to one another and we are afraid of one another. We want to give ourselves, but we fear being hurt; we want to be united with the other, yet the other terrifies us. We want the ecstasy that comes from union, but we do not want to pay the price of surrender. We want to run toward the other, but when we get close we want to flee. We want to incorporate the other and be incorporated by the other; we are terrified, though, that we will lose our identity by such an act. So we compromise, not giving ourselves over to complete love but also not retreating into hate. The name of the compromise is ambivalence, a mixture of love and hate, with love being just a little bit stronger, keeping the intimacy from breaking apart. It characterizes our marital loves, our close friendships, relationships between parents and children, and relationships with our fellow Christians and with God. Greeley, Andrew. When Life Hurts. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1988.

The highest perfection consists not in interior favors or in great raptures or in visions, or in the spirit of prophecy, but in the bringing of our wills so closely in conformity with the will of God that, as soon as we realize that He wills anything, we desire it ourselves with all our might, and take the bitter with the sweet, knowing that to be His Majesty's will. -- Teresa of Avila

Our lives are worth more than the best deal that might tempt you to sell your soul. Pg. xxxvii.

Homan, Daniel, OSB & Pratt, Lonni Collins. Radical Hospitality. Brewster, MA. Paraclete Press. 2002.

I don't know Who – or what – put the question, I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone – or Something – and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal. Dag Hammarskjöld

After the 'individual's fundament choice' will come the common option of the mass of mankind. A day must come, he believes, when men 'will have finally become conscious of their common unity and their intimate links with all the rest of the universe, and will hold in their hands the plentitude of their soul, to cast it freely into the divine centre'. It is then that the final option will be made, in the form of a world's choice between revolt and worship. de Lubac, Henri. The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin. NY. Desclee Co. 1962. Pg. 113.

There is a point at which everything becomes simple and there is no longer any question of choice, because all you have staked your life on will be lost if you look back. Life's point of no return. 54 Dag Hammarskjöld

In perplexities - when we cannot tell what to do, when we cannot understand what is going on around us -let us be calmed and steadied and made patient by the thought that what is hidden from us is not hidden from Him. Frances Ridley Havergal

Free will is not taken away because it is assisted (by grace), but is assisted in order that it not be taken away. St. Augustine

In the second half of the spiritual life, you are not making choices as much as you are being guided, taught, and led—which leads to “choiceless choices”: these are the things you cannot not do because of what you have become; things you do not need to do because they are just not yours to do; and things you absolutely must do because they are your destiny and your deepest desire. Your driving motives are no longer money, success, or the approval of others. You have found your sacred dance. Now your only specialness is in being absolutely ordinary and even “choiceless,” beyond the strong opinions, needs, preferences, and demands of your first half of life. You do not need your “visions” anymore; you are happily participating in God's vision for you. . . . Our dreams of our early years have morphed into Someone Else's dream for us. Richard Rohr

It is not easy to live faithfully in a world full of ambiguities. We have to learn to make wise choices without needing to be entirely sure. Henri Nouwen

60: Many followers were offended by this teaching, perhaps because of its cannibalistic overtones. Ingesting blood was forbidden (see v. 53n.). 63: Flesh . . . useless, an indication that the meaning of terms in this Gospel is fluid (see also “world,” 3.16; 16.33; 17.14–16). 69: Holy One of God, this title is not present elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel. See Judg 13.7; 16.17 in reference to Samson as a Nazirite, and Ps 106.16 in reference to Aaron. Pgs. 171-172. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

## **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs.121-123. To order contact [Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2006. Pgs. 123-127.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs. 145-148.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2012. Pgs. 115-118.

Halpin, Marlene, O.P. [Leading Prayer](#). Brown Pub. Dubuque, IA. 1990. LORD TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? Page 150.

Mitchell, Stephen. [The Enlightened Heart](#), Harper & Row, NY. 1989. LOVE FLOWS.: Page 65. WONDERS HAPPEN: Page 133.

Grana, Janice Ed. [Images](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona MN 1976. NOT FOR THE HESITANT: Page 130. CHOICES: page 141.