

# HOMILY ~ 21st SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME AUGUST 25/26, 2024

Many years ago, when I was working for the State of Michigan, I decided it was time for me to change careers. I decided to go to law school to prepare. Law school was hard for me. It did not come naturally to me like psychology, guidance and counseling. I really had to work at it. They told me that in order to get one of the better jobs, you have to graduate in the top 10% of your class; and that is what I decided to do. For the next five years, I had little balance in my life. I spent all of my time working my state job, studying for classes and preparing for the bar. I rarely saw my family or my friends who were not in law school. After five years, I graduated in the top 10% of my class, passed the bar the first time and landed one of those great jobs that everyone wanted at one of the largest law firms in Michigan. Objectively speaking, I got it all. There was only one problem. I was miserable in my job from day one. I told myself that I would give it six months; and if things did not change, I would quit. I quit six months to the day without another job. I just had no energy to look for anything else. This was a crisis time in my life. How could I have gotten so far off track? What was I going to do now?

In the Gospel, just prior to the Reading we heard today, Jesus told his disciples that he was the bread of life; and they had to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Jesus was talking about the Eucharist but remember this was before the Last Supper. I think Jesus was just trying to prepare them for that. However, this was just too hard for many of the Disciples to accept, and they left. Jesus turned to the twelve and asked them if they also wanted to leave. Peter answered, "*Master to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life.*" I do not think the Apostles had any understanding of what Jesus was talking about. This was probably a crisis time for them. This eating his flesh and drinking his blood sounds crazy; but I think they had enough faith in Jesus at this point that they were going to stick with him and figure it out.

We all have times of crisis in our lives. Some are bigger than others, but we all have them. When we have them, we have to decide if we are going to leave Jesus and fall into a depression or try and figure it out on our own. Or, do you have enough faith in Jesus to stick with him and figure it out?

Getting back to my own crisis, at first I did not know what I was going to do. I had no job and a mortgage to pay. I decided to go back to my job at the state. I called my old boss, and he told me he would love to hire me back; but there was a hiring freeze with the state, and he did not expect it would be lifted any time soon. There was no going back. I looked at my finances, and I had saved enough money that I would be good for some time. I decided to sit with it a while and sort it out. I had a lot of free time. For the first time in my life, I started praying every day. I got more involved with Church and started volunteering to help people. This all felt good. I saw there was nothing wrong with the job I had, it was just not the right job for me. I had bought into how our culture defines success, rather than discerning what God was calling me to do. I did find an attorney job that I liked, and I was successful at it. Eventually, I found my way to the Seminary, but it took me about four years. Now as I look back at that crisis, I am very thankful. If that would not have happened, look what I would have missed.

Sometimes we have the mindset that if we do all of the right things, God should give us a life that is easy and comfortable. However, that is not the way life is, and that is not the way God works. I am not sure why, but I can accept it because God is God and I am not. When I have struggles or a crisis in my life, I now have enough faith in Jesus that I am going to stick with him and figure it out. It does not make the rough times easy; and I sometimes have no idea how, but I know that ultimately things are going to be okay. When I want to say, "*Why me?*" I quickly follow it up with, "*Why not me?*" I am not that special. I wonder what I am going to learn from the struggle, and if just maybe I will end up in a better place. It is through the struggles and the crises in our lives that we find meaning and purpose.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim

