

PERSONAL COMMITMENT REQUIRED: 21ST SUNDAY YEAR B

Joshua says to the people he has led across the river to the Promised Land: *'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'*

Peter says something like that too. He's answering the question Jesus has put to his inner circle of disciples, *'What about you, do you want to go away too?'* Peter replies: *'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the holy one of God.'*

The movie *Lady Sings the Blues* is an oldie but a goodie. It's the life story of the famous singer, Billie Holliday. Diana Ross spent months preparing for her role as Billie. She read miles of print about Billie's life. For hours on end she listened to Billie's songs. *'I was committed to doing a good job,'* Diana said, *'I tried very hard to know her as much as I could.'*

On the other hand, Mario Lanza was shaping up to be the greatest tenor in the world. He was chosen to play the part of Enrico Caruso in the movie *The Great Caruso*. It was a smash. Fame and fortune followed the handsome singer. Soon he was lured to Hollywood. But there he went off the rails with booze, babes, and drugs, the usual temptations in show biz. At age 38, he died mysteriously in a slimming clinic, apparently a victim of the Mafia. Basically what went wrong with Mario Lanza is that he fell away from his commitment. And failing in his commitment, he failed in the necessary self-discipline to keep practising in order to keep singing at his peak.

A crisis point has come into the relationship between Jesus and his followers. Many are outraged by all he has said of himself as the Bread of Life. They walk away. We can imagine the sadness of Jesus. But it brings him to the point of putting out a challenge to those who are left. *'Do you want to stay with me?'* he asks. *'Or do you want to go away? Make up your minds. Make your choice, one way or the other.'* Peter speaks up for the group. You know what he said.

Perhaps there are times when we too feel like walking away from our contact with Jesus the Bread of Life, when we feel like staying away from the Eucharist, either occasionally or permanently. It may be that we are tired of words about it. It may be that we are tired of poor celebrations of it. It may be that some changes in the new wording have upset us. Perhaps we find it too slow. Perhaps we find it too fast. Perhaps we are saying to ourselves: *'It's all so mysterious. It's all over my head.'* Or perhaps the problem is: *'I don't know anybody much at the church.'* Or *'there's not enough time to say my own prayers.'* Or else *'the priest is too old. He's out of touch with what's happening in the world. He doesn't understand what's happening in my life.'*

May I suggest that when all is said and done, all such explanations may just be excuses and rationalizations for the one big thing that may be missing, viz., personal commitment, and what goes with personal commitment, perseverance and fidelity? Personal commitment, perseverance and fidelity! Those tried and true values no longer seem to count the way they

used to and the way they ought to. Being entertained, having fun, going out, going shopping, watching TV, playing sport, watching sport, making home renovations, anything else at all nowadays seems to matter more and be more attractive and appealing than on-going commitment to Jesus and on-going commitment to God. Anything but Jesus seems to be valued more than commitment, love, perseverance and fidelity, to God and God's people.

Unless and until we value our Sunday Eucharist as the renewal of our covenant relationship with Christ, as time shared with him during its celebration, and as the renewal of our commitment to go out from his table to make a better world, we just wont be ready to say to the Lord those wonderful words of commitment spoken by Joshua and Peter: *'As for me and my house',* said Joshua, *'we will serve the Lord.'* Peter said: *'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of everlasting life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God.'*

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