

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B

Proverbs 9:1-6

Psalms 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

Ephesians 5:15-20

John 6:51-58

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Rev. Charles B. Gordon, C.S.C.

The Garaventa Center

The University of Portland

Until this point in John's Gospel, Jesus' earthly ministry has been a big success. His words, and the powerful signs he has performed, have won him great crowds of enthusiastic followers. But now the tide has turned. The murmurs and grumbling against Jesus that we heard last week are continuing and growing in magnitude: "How can he claim to be the bread that came down from heaven?" "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" "This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?" Jesus' erstwhile supporters are disillusioned and confused. They melt away from him as quickly as they had gathered. Until, in next week's Gospel, Jesus turns to the apostles themselves and asks, "Do you want to leave me too?"

The crowds abandon Jesus because his words contradict their assumptions about what is possible -- about what is true. They measure Jesus against the conventional wisdom of their time, find him wanting, and discard him.

But not everyone leaves. Some stay with Jesus. And those who remain faithful have made an important discovery: You don't evaluate the Christ by means of conventional wisdom. Christ *is* wisdom. You don't consider whether Christ is in accord with your worldview. You view the world in Christ. Christ will not be an adornment of anyone's lifestyle, or a

buttress to anyone's ideology. He has to be at the core of who we are -- the foundation of what we believe. Christ is the way, the truth and the life. He doesn't have to conform himself to the truth. He *is* truth.

So, if you are a Christian and a political activist, you don't say, "I accept Jesus because I approve of his attitude toward the poor." You say, rather, "I pour myself out for the dispossessed because Christ did, and because he said that whatever we do to the poor, we do to him."

If you are a Christian and a feminist, you don't say, "I approve of Jesus because he's sound on women's issues." Instead, you say something like, "I am a feminist because of Christ's insistence that every person is precious in God's sight, and that no law may stand if it offends the dignity and freedom of the children of God."

If you are a Christian and an environmentalist, you don't say, "I endorse Jesus because his remarks on the birds of the air and the lilies of the field indicate that he was ecologically aware." You might say instead, "The universe is a precious gift of God, created through Christ. We need to preserve, protect, and enhance creation, so that we will be prepared when our master asks for an account of our stewardship."

And the same is true whatever our convictions, whatever our cause. We don't use them to judge Christ. Rather, they, and we, are judged by Christ. Our causes and convictions take their inspiration from our faith. And if some element of our worldview stands in contradiction to what is revealed in Christ, then our worldview, not Christ, must yield. Then, whichever way the crowd is heading, we will stand with Christ.