

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B
August 2, 2009

Readings: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15; Ephesians 4:17, 20-24; John 6:24-35

Trust God to Lead You

I remember as a small child how much I looked forward to spending time with my father on the weekends. For me it was the greatest gift he could give me. I spent a lot of time with my mom all week long; she was a stay-at-home mom. But my dad was at work all week, often working long hours. So the weekends were special. And so, when he picked up his keys and headed for the car on Saturday morning to run some errand, he would ask if I wanted to go along for a ride. Of course I would jump at the chance to join him. I didn't bother to ask where he was going. I didn't care where we were going; it was a chance just to be together. Once we were in the car I could ask about our destination, but it wasn't something that would influence whether I wanted to make the journey or not. But as I grew into my adolescence, I was more inclined to be concerned with my own plans, interests, and distractions. And I would ask where he was going first, and then I would make my decision about whether to join him or not based on his response. I wanted to know where I was going before I made my decision to follow him.

And I think all married couples can think back to the days of your courtship. You couldn't spend enough time together. And when the gentleman called up his lady to ask her out on a date, she would probably say yes first, and then inquire about what they would do, about where they would go, on the date. But over time, probably some of the excitement has worn off. Now, if one of you asks the other to join them for a ride in the car, there is a much greater chance that the other will ask where you are headed before they say yes.

Have you ever had visitors over to your house in the afternoon, and as dinner time approaches you graciously invite them to stay for dinner? What is one of the most insulting responses they can give? How about if they ask, "What are you having to eat?" You have invited your guests to stay because you want to spend time with them, but their question about your menu indicates that they may be more interested in enjoyable food than enjoyable company. Unlike the commercial, they shouldn't care whether you have mashed potatoes or Stove Top Stuffing.

The Israelites followed Moses out into the desert. They wanted to get out of slavery. They didn't care about where they were going or where they would find food and water. But in our first reading this morning, we see them grumbling against Moses and against God. They start reminiscing about the good old days of slavery back in Egypt, sitting by their fleshpots and eating their fill of bread. The people quickly lost their faith and trust in both Moses and God. God traveled with them very visibly as a column of cloud during the day and a column of fire at night, and yet being in His presence was not enough to keep them calm and at peace. They were no longer willing to be like little children or young lovers just happy to be in the presence of the one they loved.

And we need to examine our relationship with God, with Jesus. Are we willing to be like little children and follow him when He calls even if we don't know where we are going? Are we willing to be like young lovers and follow Him even when we don't know

what He has planned for our time together? Are we happy and calm and peaceful to just be in his company?

As I talked about a little last week, we often want to know what God wants us to do first so that we can decide if we want to follow His will. And then we get frustrated because we do not hear Him speaking to us. And this morning we heard in the gospel how the crowds following Jesus asked what expected of them. They said: ***“What can we do to accomplish the works of God?”*** But Jesus told them they first had to make a decision to believe in Him and to follow Him. Jesus answered: ***“This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.”*** And he added: ***“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”*** Our journey through life is just a matter of faith and trust in God.

We need to make a decision to follow Jesus without first knowing where it is that the journey will lead us. And then He will show us the way; maybe not in a dream as a grand plan, but He will guide you step by step. He will make sure that we will never hunger or thirst. Get in the car and go for a ride with Him, go on a date with Him, just because you want to be in His company. Spend quality time with Him in prayer and He will lead you where He wants you to go.

Deacon Joe Hulway