

**This week we are asked to reflect on our choices**

**Especially the difficult ones in our lives**

**We all make choices every moment of every day**

**Are my choices reflecting my beliefs?**

**It is easy to say I believe in God**

**In Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit**

**But do my choices reflect that belief?**

**It is not easy to be faithful**

**It is not easy to be a Catholic Christian in the world today**

**At times, we may even have to die a bit ourselves**

**Our faith tells us that these sacrifices will be rewarded**

**Either in this life or in the next**

**What is our response when our faith is challenged?**

**When our friends and neighbors ask ‘what’s the point’?**

**When it might be easier to sleep in on a Sunday morning?**

**When our friends or job lead us away from God?**

**Will we abandon our relationship with God for personal autonomy?**

**For political gain?**

**For power of one sort or another?**

**The cross was not easy for Christ, either**

***Father, save me from this hour***

**But then, in obedience, he embraces his hour**

**He surrenders to the Father's will**

**An act of the heart**

**An act of the will**

**He made his choice**

**He shows us the way through our cross**

**Not avoiding it**

**Not escaping it**

**But through the cross to the resurrection**

**For Christ, his desire to save us was stronger than death**

***Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies***

***It remains just a grain of wheat***

***But if it dies, It produces much fruit***

**One tiny seed of wheat produces a plant**

**Eventually an ear**

**And within the ear is a multitude of seeds**

**Some of which will become food**

**But some will be selected to be planted**

**Some is ground up and mixed with other seeds**

**Becoming flour and then bread**

**Some will feed our bodies**

**Some will become a host and feed our souls**

**Other seeds will be placed into the ground**

**Where they will rot**

**But then they will germinate**

**And bring new life**

**The wheat doesn't have a choice**

**It doesn't have free will**

**But we do**

**So where are our choices leading us?**

**Jeremiah was a prophet to the Israelite nation**

**A nation that was torn apart bit physically**

**A northern kingdom and a southern kingdom**

**But worse this, it is a people that is torn apart spiritually**

**They have turned their backs on their covenant with God**

**They were conquered and taken from their homes**

**Physically enslaved once again because of their infidelity**

**Spiritually enslaved to sin because of their choices**

**But the Lord promises a new covenant**

**He doesn't wait for them to turn back**

**His promise is made while they are still turned away**

**This new covenant will not be written on stone tablets**

**But on their hearts**

***I will be their God***

***And they will be my people***

**God has mercy and compassion on his people**

**The hope of the future will begin in their everyday life**

**This covenant is fulfilled in Jesus Christ**

**A covenant he chooses to give to His children**

**We see this in his response to the Greeks**

**It seems a simple request**

***We would like to see Jesus***

**But his response is not so simple**

**He first announces his hour has come**

**And he instructs us**

***Whoever would serve me will follow me***

**He concludes by speaking of his death**

**With an invitation for us to follow as well**

**The path to glory is not easy**

**It is the cross**

***I am troubled now***

**It was not easy for Christ**

**Did it cause him to lose sleep?**

**Did it cause him nightmares?**

**Are we surprised it is not easy for us?**

**Humiliation, suffering, death: these are not easy**

***But it was for this purpose I came to this hour***

**His choice to unite his will with that of the Father**

**The grace of our salvation is free**

**But it is not cheap**

**It is a gift for everyone**

**But a gift we are free to accept or reject**

**It is a gift that brings many opportunities**

**It is a gift that has responsibilities as well**

**These responsibilities are the choices we make**

**Choosing to live Catholic Christian lives in our families**

**Our workplaces, our school, our parish, our city, our nation**

**We come today to say the same thing the Greeks said**

***I want to see Jesus***

**But to see him is not to demand a miracle**

**It would be nice to experience a healing**

**But is that what our faith hangs upon?**

**If we truly want to see Jesus**

**Ask to see the true Jesus**

**The Jesus that did not shy away from the cross**

**The Jesus who did not turn away from suffering**

**The Jesus that walked through the cross into a new birth**

**The life of the resurrection**

**This is the meaning of the Lenten season**

**If Lent is not a time of new birth**

**It becomes a shell of faith**

**It is empty**

**We can observe a lot of practices**

**We can be up in adoration all night**

**We can give up all the candy and TV and alcohol we want**

**And we can keep a heart of stone**

**Our faith can become an hour a week we give to God**

**And all the jealousies, sarcasm, and prejudices remain**

**A faith of childhood memories about the good old days**

**But one of little adult commitment**

**If we forget Lent is about new birth**

**We can end up with an easy, convenient religion**

**But we do not come to truly know Jesus**

**When we die to self during Lent**

**Our shell is cracked open**

**When we die to ourselves, we become open to new life**

**Open to new life in our marriage**

**Even if we are celebrating 50 years of marriage**

**Open to new life in children or grandchildren**

**Open to new possibilities in our jobs**

**Open to a new direction in my life**

**We can be open to new life in our parish and our church**

**It is an opportunity to really embrace Holy Family parish**

**If Lent is a time of dying to yourself**

**Our outer shell begins to crack open**

**The Holy Spirit enters**

**We begin to sprout new roots**

**A powerful, new relationship with God gets new life**

**A relationship that is lived in communion with each other**

**The old is laid to rest during Lent**

**And a new life is born on Easter morning**

**If we make the choice to live Lent in this way**

**It can never be the same old thing again**

***Unless the grain of wheat dies, it remains only a grain of wheat***

***But if it dies, it produces much fruit***