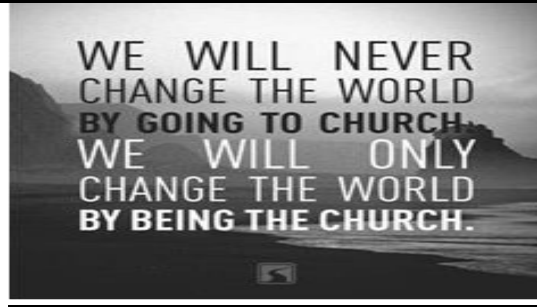


## **21<sup>st</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time**



The readings challenge us to reassess our loyalty. Loyalty is a response to those we love. This reality calls for sacrifice. Loyalty resembles covenant.

In the first reading, Joshua's farewell speech describes covenant making. After having settled in the Promised Land, the Israelites are challenged to choose to whom they pledge their loyalty. This could have been an on-going or an annual pledge. It reminds us of the renewal of our baptismal vows that we pledge every Easter season. To be an Israelite was a spiritual unity. A pledge to Yahweh for Yahweh led and protected his people during the Exodus. It was Yahweh or nothing.

In the second reading, Paul uses a domestic code which listed the obligations of the household members to explain and motivate the duties of the Christian household.

But the Christian household is held to a much higher level. Man and woman are to love as Christ loves the Church. They are to be submissive to each other. They are to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." The two will become one flesh. This loyalty is a great mystery.

In the Gospel, John is not describing Jews, some believing and some rejecting, He is describing members of the Christian community. After following him and believing, they can't believe that he is the bread come down from heaven. They find it more difficult to believe that he could ascend to heaven. They break away and reject the loyalty they had for him. Jesus makes another appeal. This time He forms a poignant question to the twelve. "Do you also wish to go away?" in reply Peter says "to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life." He speaks for the twelve and announces their profound loyalty.