

I remember reading about one of our saints – I can't recall who it was – Teresa of Avila? As a little girl she was presented a choice as to what she wanted – this or that? Her response? I want them all!

That is obviously our theme in all the readings – we have to make choices in life. We can't have it all.

As you probably know we have been preparing to move into new offices. We knew this would create a great deal of stress for all of us, as uprooting from one's comfortable home is not always easy. So green Gumbys were handed out.

Gumby is that green rubber fellow who is very flexible. And that was to be our theme in the move – be open, be flexible! A contest was then started – whoever could come up with the best picture of gumby in various situations would win a gift certificate. We have them posted on the wall in the parish hall.

Nice attitude to have in such a move, but there are times in which we cannot be flexible and by that, I mean living the truth, living a truly authentic life immersed in the dogmas of our faith.

There are just areas of life that we really cannot be flexible. The Ten Commandments are not 10 suggestions on how to live our lives. Jesus was not just a great guy with ideas that we can conform to what we want him to be. There are times which there is a yes or no answer.

Our Christian faith was known as “the Way” before it was known as Christianity. It implies a journey on which we are invited to a way of life, not a system of thought and behavior that we set up for ourselves. The initiate is God's, who “first loved us” (1 John 4:19). “You did not choose me, but I chose you,” Jesus said (John 15:16)

An invitation calls for a choice: acceptance or refusal. In the Old Testament reading, Joshua (whose name, incidentally, is the Hebrew form of Jesus) said to the people, “Choose today whom you wish to serve.”

The “gods beyond the river”, no doubt, had their attractions; they probably demanded less and could be easily manipulated. Joshua's God was more demanding.

Most likely some left. Still happens today. If you don't like a homily or challenging teaching, we just switch churches or faiths until we are once again comfortable.

Making some of us more uncomfortable, we have Saint Paul telling the wives to be submissive to their husband. I can just picture some of the guys gently elbowing your wives in agreement. Not so quick.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment one is told not to covet one's wife. This does not just deal with chastity, because it also adds, slaves and donkeys and the like. The wife was property, the marriages were arraigned, as one did not normally fall in love and marry the person as today.

Paul is telling them you must love them! Paul is telling the husband you must treat them as Christ submits himself for the life of the Church. Love them or you will have no place with me.

And finally, the gospel – it asks for a straight up choice. The gospel readings for the past five weeks have been on the Eucharist. Today's final reading in this series is climatic. It asks for a response of faith.

These are the words of Christ which many found too difficult to accept: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you don’t have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.”

How are believers to understand these graphic images of the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic bread and wine?

\*The Catechism says that Christ is “truly really and substantially present in the Eucharist, body and blood, soul and divinity.” At the consecration, the bread and wine are not simply given a new meaning; they become a new reality.

This is an objective presence, not a symbolic presence. Christ is present bodily, but a spiritual body, not a physical body.

This means that the bread is the body of Christ, not as textured flesh and bone, but as the identity of the person. The consecrated wine is the blood of Christ, not as an anatomical fluid, but as the very life of the person.

The verse, “This is the cup of my blood,” can be translated correctly as “This is the cup of my life. Drink of my life!”

Parents speak of their children as their own flesh and blood, as a shared life of the body, but not a cold aloof physical identity.

This question of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is not academic speculation. No gumby here.

At issue is the very essence of what it means to receive communion. People have a spiritual hunger for God, to be close to God, to be united with God. They do not hunger for symbols of God or images of God. They hunger for God.

The gospel says that some rejected the teaching of Christ on the Eucharist, returned to their former way of life, and no longer accompanied him.

Notice he did not chase after them and say “I just meant a symbol, I was just kidding! Be flexible! Look I’m holding gumby!” No, he simply let them go with.

Jesus then asked those who remained, “Do you also want to leave?” Peter answered for the twelve—and for all of us, “Master, to whom shall we go?” You have the words of eternal life.” So very true today, as well.

I love the Catholic Faith. What I hate is what some have done to it or allowed it to continue in a past era of time. All should be exposed for such grievous crimes and be brought to light. No more hiding.

However, that is not my generation nor certainly not this generation of clergy and seminarians. It is not my Church today.

What I see in this Church, is Christ, purifying the past crimes, but what lies before me is the beauty of my Catholic Faith.

There is nowhere else I could go to see such beauty. Nowhere. That will always be my choice.