

# Sermon for Sunday, Week 21 of Ordinary Time, Year B

2021

**First Reading: Joshua 24:1-2,15-18**

**Second Reading: Ephesians 5:21-32**

**Gospel: John 6:60-69**

*First. God revealed in His works. The beginning of the religion.*

Recently I was speaking to someone who has just moved from a big city to a country cottage not far from us, and he told me that one of things that has impressed him most since he came to Buchan is the night sky, with the stars in their glory.

When we look at the wonderful things around us our minds are drawn to their Creator.

The prophet Amos was amazed at the night sky, and his thoughts turned to God: “He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night... the Lord is his name” (cf. 5:8).

St. Josephine Bakhita, too, when she was a young girl on the plains of Sudan, not yet a Christian, looked up at the stars and asked herself who it could be who lit all those lights in the heavens.

He must be very great.

It is clear that there is a power at work in the ordering and maintaining of the universe that is more than human (cf. Job 38, esp. v. 31).

“The Lord is His Name” (Amos 5:8).

We call Him God.

The great God deserves our thanks and praise, our reverence and our love.

Letting us contemplate His works, God helps us to appreciate His greatness and to honour Him.

And when by repetition we form the good habit of honouring God, we have acquired the virtue of religion.

This is a very good thing because honouring God ennobles and elevates us. It lifts us above earthly things and makes us share in some way in God’s justice.

*Second. A deliberate choice for God.*

But God has done much more than surround us with the wonder of creation.

In the fulness of time, He sent us His Son to reveal His love in full.

It must have been wonderful for the Apostles to go about with Jesus, whom they rightly believed to be God-among-them, the Lord of glory in human form (cf. Phi 2:7).

Imagine how beautiful He must have been; how lovely His eyes; how gentle His smile; how peaceful His disposition.

Still, it is not always easy to follow Jesus.

There often comes a time when we need to make a deliberate decision to accept His teaching, keep His commandments, and continue to be faithful.

Joshua (whose actions in many ways resemble those of Jesus, his future namesake) challenged the ancient Israelites to decide who they wished to serve.

He did this at a place called Shechem, which in Hebrew means “shoulder”.

Yes, there comes a time when choosing to follow Jesus and be faithful to God means ‘shouldering’, or taking up, our cross.

But we should not be frightened when we are called to make choices like this, when we have to ‘shoulder’ the cross.

Rather, we should be glad that our good God wants to unite us more closely to Himself.

It is out of love that, at times, He permits the cross to come to us.

He will always give us the help we need to walk forward if we say Yes, renew our faith in Him (like Peter), and trustfully follow where our Shepherd has gone before.

### Third. *Humility.*

In order to do this, we need to cultivate another virtue – one of the most important: humility.

Humility enables us to do what St. Paul commands in our second reading today: “Give way to one another in obedience to Christ”.

It is opposed to arrogance, which is a bad habit (a vice) by which we impose our will unreasonably on others.

Humility doesn’t mean becoming a door-mat for others to just walk over or trample.

It means having a correct understanding of who we are in relation to others, and, in particular, recognising our dependence upon God.

Saint Paul pointed this out quite clearly to the Corinthians, to whom he wrote: “What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?” (1Co 4:7).

So, let us not think more highly of ourselves than we should.

Instead, let us turn our inward gaze to Christ, the Sun of Justice [who “reflects the glory of God” (Heb 1:3)], and set ourselves with the humble company of the Apostles to love Him and serve Him faithfully to the end.

May the Immaculate Virgin Mary bless this proposal and keep us always in God’s love.

So: to summarise:

1. Learn to recognise God in His wonderful works.
2. See Him especially in His Son Jesus Christ.
3. Honour Him, love Him, serve Him. This is a great glory for man.
4. Don’t be frightened at the presence of the cross in your lives,
5. but seek the Lord in humility of heart, and He will make all things well.

*Praised be Jesus and Mary!*