

Are you also going to leave me?

I was talking to a woman recently, who told me that she was a **non-practicing Methodist** and that **her son ... also a non-practicing Methodist ...**
had just gotten engaged to ... a Catholic girl.

She said, my first response to him was to ask,
“Does she believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?”

When her son said yes, she told him *“Well, that’s all that matters to me!”*

Is that true? Is that all that matters ... that a person believes in the Trinity?

I wondered why she didn’t ask her son questions like:

- **Is she baptized?**
- **Does she go to Church every Sunday?**
- **Is she a prayerful woman?**
- **Is this her first marriage?**

I could tell she was trying to be very accepting of her son’s choice of a wife ...
and as long as a Catholic girl believed in the Trinity that’s all that mattered.

Well, what exactly is required to get to Heaven?

Is believing in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all you need?

The sign board on **the Gardendale First Baptist Church on Main St.** has the verse
‘For is you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart
that God raised him from the dead you will be saved.’

Those are the words of **St. Paul** from chapter **10** of his letter to the **Romans**.

I wonder how many people read that verse and figure that’s all they have to do to gain Heaven.

Is that true?

Is that **all you have to do** get into Heaven ...
is to confess Jesus as Lord and believe He was raised from the dead?

I don’t think so!

I mean it’s surely one thing ... but it’s not the only thing!

That would be like reading a sign that says:

“If you drink lots of water, you will live a long life”

and then thinking that’s **the only thing** you need to do to live a long life.

Is it also important for you to eat a **balanced diet**, get plenty of sleep and **exercise**, and **keep warm** and **safe** and **dry**?

Yes it is!

So drinking lots of water ... is **just one of many things** ... you need to do to live a long life.

It’s the same with getting to live with God forever in **Heaven.**

There’s more than **one thing** we must do!

For example,

Jesus tells us in **John 3:5**

To enter Heaven *“You must be born again of water and the Holy Spirit.”*

Jesus tells us in **Matt. 18: 3**

“Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children,³ you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus tells us in **Matt. 18: 24**

You will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven

“unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.”

Jesus tells us in **Luke 6:46**

“Why do you call me, Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command?”

And just last week **Jesus** told us in **John 6: 53**

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has Eternal Life, and I will raise him on the last day.”

Wow!

It sounds like there’s **a little more to it** than just believing in
the Resurrection or the Trinity.

And **these requirements** came from **Jesus Himself** ... not one of His Apostles!

You know, it’s great that you declared **Jesus to be Lord** when you made an **Altar Call** at **age 15**, but the **question is,** where is your **heart** and **soul** **today?**

God wants us to spend our whole lives deepening our relationship and our union with Him until the day comes that we're ready for the Eternal Union in Heaven.

This involves keeping the Ten Commandments of God.

It involves gathering in community every Sunday in Church to give praise to God and to receive his guidance and blessing.

And yet, how many don't do this?

The number is large and growing of people who no longer go to Church.

Even here in the Bible Belt of the South ... I don't believe there's a single family where one or more members are no longer attending any church at all.

This situation of people turning away from God is not new ... it's occurred all throughout the Bible.

In our **First Reading** today, the new leader of the Israelite people, Joshua, sees the **people showing the same loss of faith in the One True God that we're seeing today.**

And **so he gathers all the people together and questions them whether they intend to stay true to the God that rescued them out of bondage to Pharaoh or not.**

Joshua says, "Decide today whom you will serve."

You see, **the Israelites**, who were **God's chosen people**, seem to of had a **very short memory** because within one generation of being freed from slavery in Egypt and entering into the Promised Land where they ... were experiencing the blessings of God in a land flowing with milk & honey ... many of them quickly forgot about God.

Yes, many ceased to worship Him ... and many turned to worshiping the pagan gods of the people they displaced.

So, Joshua rebukes them for their error and announces his allegiance to God. He declares, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Fortunately, **many of the people recalled the power and protection of God and they recommit themselves to him saying, "We also will serve the Lord, for he is our God."**

That was great ... but sadly, their recommitment to walk with God didn't last.

Time and again, the Chosen People would turn away from God

Some would come back ... **but many** would walk away.

We hear this in **particularly poignant way** in our **Gospel** today ...
when **John** tells us many walked away from God **when He** is right there with them!

After Jesus announces that “*anyone who feeds on Me will have life because of Me*”
John records, “*Many of his disciples returned to their former way of life*
and no longer accompanied him.”

What did they do? **They** walked away from God ... in the flesh!
Imagine that, turning your back and walking away from Jesus!

What a **sad picture** that is! Where could you possibly be going when you leave?
What could possibly be more important that being with Jesus?

And yet that’s what **many Catholics** do ... to this very day.

One statistic says that some 80% of Catholics don’t go to Church regularly ... some
go occasionally, some go to a **non-Catholic Church** and some **don’t go at all!**

In **each case**, **those** who turn away from the Catholic Church ...
turn away from being in **the presence of Jesus**.

Now for those who don’t go to church at all, **they’re** sinning against the **Third Commandment** where **God** commands everyone to keep holy the Lord’s Day.

And for those who go to a non-Catholic Church they’re forfeiting the chance to be
in the presence of Jesus ... the One True God ... who is present on the Altar and
in the Tabernacle veiled under the appearance of bread and wine.

Three weeks ago, **Jesus** said, “*My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven.*”
Here, **Jesus** was referring to Himself ... as **the true wisdom** and **true power of God**.

Two weeks ago, **Jesus** affirmed this by declaring,
“*I am the living Bread come down from Heaven.*” In other words, **the wisdom** and
power of God was here on Earth ... alive in human flesh right before their eyes.

And then, **last week**, **Jesus** declared,
“*The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.*”

Clearly, **God** gives us true bread from Heaven in **His Son Jesus**.
And Jesus gives **this true bread** to us
By giving us His very own Flesh and Blood to eat!

Over the **past 5 weeks**, we've proclaimed and meditated on the **71 verses** of **John 6**.

It's **really important!**

It lays the foundation for **our belief** in the **True Presence** of Jesus in the **Eucharist!**

So, if the day comes that your **spouse**, your **son** or **daughter** or one of your **friends** talks about leaving the **Catholic Church**, you'll be able to guide them to stay.

Hopefully they'll come to see the need to feed on the **Flesh and Blood** of the **Son of God** in order to have **eternal life!**

To leave the **Catholic Church** would mean giving up **one of the greatest gifts** that **Jesus** wanted us to have for **our earthly pilgrimage** ... the **gift of Himself as food**.

No other church even claims that their communion is **truly** the **Flesh and Blood** of **Jesus Christ**. **To them**, the wafers of bread and cups of grape juice that they distribute are **simply symbols** of **their unity** in Jesus. **Those elements** are not **Jesus!**

So **the question** that remains on the table is this: *Where are you going to go?*

Where are you going to go ... to eat the flesh and drink the blood ... of Jesus?

When Jesus spoke to the people of **this necessity...**

St. John reports in today's Gospel ... that **many of them** walked away!

But even with that, **Jesus** didn't soften or rephrase **what He had just said ...**
that they had to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood to have **Eternal Life**.

No, He turned to the **Twelve Apostles** and asked, "*Are you also going to leave me?*"

In **today's terms** that would be like **Jesus** asking:

"Are you also going to walk away from My Church?"

Recall that **Jesus** started the **Catholic Church** when He said to **Peter**,

"You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church."

So, are you going to go and attend a **church started by someone else?**

Or, are you going to go off and start **your own church** like **so many** others do?

Are you looking for something more **comfortable?**

Are you looking for something more **progressive?**

Are you looking for something **less structured?**

Are you looking for something with **more contemporary music?**

Are you hoping to find something that will be a nice compromise between your beliefs and the beliefs of your spouse or your girlfriend or boyfriend?

Just know that **anything you find** will be a huge compromise ... because you'll be forsaking the **only opportunity** you have to be in **actual communion** with **Jesus**, who **wants desperately to come into your body to nourish** you and sustain you with **Himself** ... His Body and Blood ... His Power ... His Love ... and His Strength.

How sad that **only 20%** of those who claim to be **Catholic** ...
partake of this gift regularly!

Hopefully through **prayer** and **study**, **you** or your **family** or your **friends** would **come** to the same conclusion that **St. Peter did** and be able to convincingly say,
“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of Eternal Life.”
“We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

What a **marvelous demonstration of faith!**

Peter didn't have a clue as to how he would eat the flesh & drink the blood of Jesus. **But** he had seen enough and heard enough to believe **Jesus** would show them a way. **So** he stayed and his patience was rewarded at the Last Supper where **Jesus** instituted the Eucharist ... giving them His Body & Blood under the appearance of **Bread** and **Wine** and **then** giving them the power to carry on the miracle for future generations.

If you are in the **Catholic Church**,
you are home in the Church that **Jesus** established for your salvation.

If you are not in the **Catholic Church**, you are invited to come home through a process known as RCIA that begins in **9 days** on **Tuesday, September 1st**.

If you have separated yourself from the **Sacramental life** of the Catholic Church by **serious sin**, by **living together outside Marriage** or by **getting married** or **remarried** outside the Catholic Church, please see a Priest to guide you back.

It's here, in the **Catholic Church**,
that you have **the fullness** of all that **Jesus** wants you to have for **the journey**.

It's here that you have not only the **word of God** in the Gospels ...
but also the power of God in the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ.

You won't find this anywhere else!

So, hold on to both of these precious gifts.

Hold on to them for dear life ... hold on to them for Eternal life!