



22. August 2021

## “Time for Decision”

Jos 24:1-2a.15-17.18b

*Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together at Shechem; he then summoned all the elders of Israel, its leaders, judges and officials, and they presented themselves in God's presence. Joshua then said to all the people:*

*'If serving Yahweh seems a bad thing to you, today you must make up your minds whom you do mean to serve, whether the gods whom your ancestors served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now living. As regards my family and me, we shall serve Yahweh.' The people replied, 'Far be it from us to desert Yahweh and to serve other gods! Yahweh our God was the one who brought us and our ancestors here from Egypt, from the place of slave-labour, who worked those great wonders before our eyes and who kept us safe all along the way we travelled and among all the peoples through whom we passed. We too shall serve Yahweh, for he is our God.'*

Joshua had grown old and knew that the time of his death was near. He had performed his service and remained faithful to the Lord, and he wanted the people to continue on that path, too, once he was no longer with them. This is the context in which Joshua summons the people: the “time of decision” had come for them!

The “time of decision”?

All of us who follow the Lord have already made our decision to serve Him. Along the way, we encounter new decisions regarding our vocation, our way of following Christ, or steps of conversion that we must take to deepen our faith... These are all important decisions, to carry forward and strengthen that first decision. The more firmly we take these steps, the more we will be rooted in the Lord!

But the “time of decision” can reach another level... Let us think, for example, of martyrdom. The time may come when our faith is so threatened that we have to profess it in mortal danger. In other words, the confession of our faith could lead to death.

Why is the “confession of faith” so important and why does it have such a high value? We would find ourselves in a “state of emergency” here, and the gift of fortitude must then become effective in us. A stronger form of love must be activated, which far surpasses our “normal” love.

In the first place, it is love for Jesus that moves us to be faithful to Him, as well as gratitude for all that He has done for us, as we hear the People of Israel in today's reading praising the works that God did for them. But something else must be added: confession of the truth. Faith in Jesus is necessary for eternal salvation, even if it is not imposed on us. It is not a simple choice among many possibilities; it is man's response to the Coming of God. Faith in Jesus corresponds to the reality that comes from God and that has been foreseen by Him for man's journey. Every person will meet Jesus, at the latest after his death, because every person needs the forgiveness of his sins, which the Lord obtained for us on the Cross.

Therefore, to confess Jesus is to bear witness to the truth, to bear witness to God's action, to recognize his greatness, to realize the reign of Christ, before whom *“all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Phil. 2:10-11)

The present time, increasingly marked by apostasy, exhorts us to great vigilance and fidelity:

*“The time is sure to come when people will not accept sound teaching, but their ears will be itching for anything new and they will collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then they will shut their ears to the truth and will turn to myths.”* (2 Tim 4:3-4)

In these “times of decision”, may the Lord grant us the courage to remain faithful to him and confess our faith!