

Have you ever heard it said that “If a butterfly flaps its wings in South America, it could lead to a hurricane in the United States”?

Admittedly, this is a bit of oversimplification of what is called “The Butterfly Effect”.

The theory is probably best demonstrated by imagining a ball perched on a high mountain peak that is set in motion down the mountain. Where the ball eventually bounces or rolls can be traced back to the slight nudge to the right or left that the ball was given when started in motion. A little more to the right and it could land in a green field, a millimeter to the left and it crashes into a house near the road, hundreds of feet away from the green field. The Butterfly Effect says that an action at the very beginning of a larger event, matters.

Now ... we are not balls and life is not a mountain.

But every day we make choices that MAY have an effect on a much larger event later in our lives.

For example, a child may choose, without any real thought, to pass on the folded note that comes his way during class. Innocent enough, right? He didn't right the note and he was not the intended receiver of the note, so what can become of it?

At best, nothing much happens at all. The note is delivered – end of story. But what if he gets caught?

What if the note was passed during a final exam and the note had answers to some of the questions. Now our student is implicated in cheating and expelled. Being expelled for cheating stops him from graduating or getting into college and he ends up living in his mom's basement until he is 30 or 40 or 50?

If, according to the theory of the butterfly effect, small choices can potentially have huge implications, how much difference will our bigger decisions make? Where to go to college, what house to buy, what person to marry or what job to take... all of these are very important.

Now, not all of our choices need to end poorly, most end quite well.

But, for sure, our choices may have an effect on others, even if they do depend on a lot of “what if scenarios”.

Regardless of the outcome, the beauty of personal choice is that choices are always uniquely our own to make.

I am certain of this: if we could see the future, we would make some of our choices differently.

So..... we can agree that choices matter.

They matter for the moment, for the future and for the eternal.

In our first reading Joshua gathers the 12 tribes of Israel at Shechem—the place where God first appeared to their father Abraham, promising to make his descendants a great nation in a new land.

Joshua issues a blunt challenge... make a choice...either renew your covenant with God, who has delivered you from Egypt, or serve the alien gods of the surrounding nations.

Similarly, the 12 apostles, in today’s Gospel, are asked to make a choice—either to believe and accept the new covenant Jesus offers in His body and blood, or return to their former ways of life.

We too are being asked today to decide whom we will serve and what we believe. For the last few weeks we have been presented, in the liturgy of the word, the mystery of the Eucharist—a miracle far greater than those performed by God in bringing the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

We are asked to make a choice. Though we cannot see the journey, the effect is seen in its eternal conclusion.

God has promised us a new homeland, eternal life, and offered us bread from heaven to strengthen us on our journey. Jesus has told us bluntly that unless we eat His flesh and drink His blood we will have no life in us. Our Lord does not mince words here, nor does He back down on His teaching, even when most abandon Him.

Jesus has given us the words of eternal life. God has promised the outcome, and as all of the Saints can attest ... He delivers on His promises.

For the Eucharist is never a question of “what if?” but rather an affirmation of “What is and always will be!”

We must believe, as Peter says today, that Jesus is the Holy One of God, who handed himself over for us, gave His flesh for the life of the world and that that flesh is present here.

It is sad that so many may come to the worst possible outcome, but it is madness and recklessness to choose the worst outcome.

Let us make our choice known today. Approach the altar with confidence that our choosing the Eucharist matters, that it will and does have purpose.

Life is so much more than butterflies and connected or even random events. To live as if it were is not living, that’s existing! That’s getting by.

Again, today we are given the choice of Eucharist or No Eucharist, life or death. Choose life, choose the one who is life, choose the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, choose to believe .... and live.