

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of faith and the way we can keep it alive in us. As Christians, in fact, our faith in Jesus Christ has its foundation in the faith of Israel and the great events of salvation realized by God since the choice of Abraham, the liberation from Egypt, and the coming of Jesus into the world.

In the first reading, the book of Wisdom recalls the great event of Passover that sanctioned Exodus the night Israel left Egypt. For the writer of this book, this event was known beforehand in faith to the patriarchs so that in spite of bad things happening to their descendants, they were courageous, awaiting their salvation from God and the destruction of their enemies.

What is behind this text is the idea that whatever happens to human beings, faith in God assures them that somehow God will step in and take care of them. So were the children of Israel secretly prepared for their liberation and celebrated it with a divine institution while their enemies were punished.

Another point is the idea that the Passover is not only a historic fact, but also a salvation event that happened once, but in which we still share today the promise of its fulfillment. In that sense, we can say that any salvation mystery has a threefold dimension as it refers to the past as a memorial, to the present as a gift that affects our lives today, and to the future as an anticipation of the fulfillment of God's promise. But all that is done in faith as it was for Abraham, our father in faith, and for Sarah his companion of the journey.

As we heard in the second reading, what makes Abraham special is his faith in God. It is not faith understood as knowledge of God or comprehension of the things of God, but total trust and complete confidence in him. That is why for the Letter to the Hebrews, faith is absolutely certain that what it believes is true and what it expects will come. It is a hope which looks forward, not with wishful longing, but with utter conviction.

Abraham and Sarah provide us with a model for our own faith. They teach us that faith is an adventure with God, a determination to walk with God and follow him without reservation, even if we do not know where it can lead us and what the consequences will be.

Most of us have a problem with waiting: to wait in line, to wait our turn, to wait for a plane or for an appointment, etc. Abraham and Sarah teach us that to have faith is to learn how to wait, to wait with patience for the fulfillment of God's promise. Perhaps we want the promise to be fulfilled right now, but God has his own time and we have to wait.

Abraham and Sarah teach us that a person of faith lives in the world, but with his/her eyes beyond this world. To have the eyes beyond this world means to have a dream. In the case of Abraham, the dream was given to him by God when he told him that, although his wife was old enough to have a child, they would have an abundance of descendants; although they were nomads and strangers they would have a stable and wonderful land.

They both lived in the world with that vision in mind, braving all difficulties and accepting sacrifices because of their loyalty to God. By the grace and the power of God, the impossible became true in their lives. From them, we learn that faith is the ability to believe in the impossible. From them, we learn that because nothing is impossible with God, a little more waiting, a little more hoping, would make the dream come true.

Like Sarah and Abraham, we are pilgrims who are on a journey, sometimes crossing difficult times and dark moments. Whatever might be the crisis of our life, we need faith in God in order to make this journey meaningful. Like Abraham, our faith will be tested, but we have to stand firm. The prize awaiting us is big and worthwhile in enduring sacrifices and hardships.

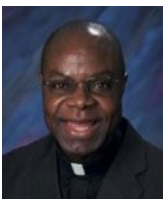
Jesus formulates this idea in the Gospel by inviting us to courage and the desire of our heavenly home. He says, "Don't be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom". In order to have access to that kingdom, we have to share our material goods through almsgiving and build a treasure in heaven by our faithfulness to its values.

The problem we face, however, is that nobody knows when the kingdom will come. It is like being unexpectedly visited by robbers in the middle of the night. If one just knew; what couldn't he do to protect himself and to defend his household? Therefore, we have to be prepared so that whenever Jesus comes back, he might find us ready to share in the joy of heaven. It would be a shame to be surprised by such an important event that will sanction the end of our pilgrimage on earth.

We have to take seriously this warning of Jesus. There is a continual human tendency to always delay what we can do today for tomorrow, under the pretext that, because we are in good health or are still young, we still have time. Who knows how much time is still left for you? Who knows what can happen to you tomorrow? Blessed is the one who knows what to do and strives at his or her best to do it.

Remember that knowledge and privilege bring responsibility and accountability. Sin is doubly sinful to those who knew better what to do and did not; failure is doubly blameworthy in those who had every chance to do well and did not, because they were negligent.

Let us pray that the Lord may help us to work hard for our salvation, so that he might find us in peace with him, with our neighbor and with ourselves. God bless you all!



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**Wisdom 18, 6-9; Hebrews 11, 1-2, 8-19; Luke 12, 32-40**