

## **Nineteenth Sunday day in Ordinary Time C/2016**

The readings of this Sunday talk about faith and trust in God. They show that God instructs and warns in advance those who put their trust in him. They invite us to renew our faith in God and to faithfully fulfill the mission he has given us.

The first reading recalls the night of the Passover when the Israelites were liberated from Egypt. It shows how their forefathers knew in advance what would happen to them. It also shows how the Israelites acted secretly with full knowledge because of the instructions received from God.

What is behind this text is the idea that whatever might be the suffering of his people, God set them eventually free. There is also the idea that God glorifies his name when he saves his people from distress.

This text helps us understand the stakes of today's Gospel as Jesus praises the faithful servant who stays on duty until his master's return. First of all, the Gospel starts with Jesus' assurances to his disciples to not be afraid. Then, it gives his instruction to them about almsgiving and the building of treasure in heaven. It also speaks of Jesus' parable about preparedness for the kingdom of God and readiness for the service. After that, the Gospel reports Peter's question to Jesus about the addresses of the parable and Jesus' response in terms of the parable of the master of the house.

In the second part of the parable, the Gospel reports the words of Jesus about the faithful and prudent steward that the master put in charge of his household and who is blessed because he vigilantly remains on duty until his return. Then, it talks about the punishment of the unfaithful servant who is incapable of fulfilling his duty and whom the master surprises with his unannounced return.

In the end, the Gospel reports the words of Jesus about the lot reserved for the servant who knew the will of his master, but did not act on it properly and that of the one who knew it, but did not care at all. Finally, the Gospel gives an account of the words of Jesus saying that much will be required of the person entrusted with much and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.

What do we learn from today's readings? Today I want to talk about the challenge of faith. In order to let you understand what I mean, let me start with an observation. In fact, we all have had dreams about things we want to achieve for ourselves, for our families, for our relatives or our careers, etc.

Most of the time, when we have a dream, it becomes the engine that makes us live, because it captures our imagination, generates in us energy, awakens our passion and maintains our motivation. The dream might be difficult to achieve, but we persevere with determination and patience; we believe in what we are doing and dedicate ourselves to its fulfillment.

The process that makes a dream become reality is similar to the process of faith. Faith, indeed, requires trust, perseverance, patience and determination. Those elements appear in the life of Abraham and Sarah, our forefathers in faith.

For Abraham and Sarah, faith is a total trust in God. It is a hope that awaits with certainty the fulfillment of God's promise, a resilience to follow him whatever might be

the price to pay. That is why the Letter to the Hebrews says that faith is absolutely certain that what it believes is true and what it expects will come.

To have faith, then, is to walk with God and follow him without hesitation, even if we do not know where all that can lead us. Moreover, to have faith is to wait with patience for the fulfillment of God's promise. That is very challenging for us, because we do not want to wait. We all want our problems to be resolved right away and we all have little patience when it does not happen.

And yet, Abraham and Sarah waited until the day it pleased God to visit them and give them a child. To have faith, finally, is to live in this world with our eyes beyond this world. For that reason, we have to understand that we are on earth like pilgrims. Our true home is heaven where God awaits us at the end of our earthly journey.

That is why, Jesus warns us in the parables so that we do not miss the train when it comes to take us. He is inviting us to live in sobriety in the world and to build treasure in heaven instead of spending all our energy at what cannot help us. He invites us to be vigilant like a servant who stays awake and on duty until his master comes back.

Because we are pilgrims on earth, we have to prepare ourselves for the homeland. But why shall we be prepared? We have to do so, because nobody knows when Jesus will come back. As it is with an unexpected break-in of a house, so will it be with the return of Jesus. If only one knew that there would be a break-in of his home; what would he not do to in order to protect it?

Therefore, if we do not want to be surprised, we better be prepared and ready. We have always to remember that blessed is the one who knows what to do and strives to do it. In the same logic, cursed is the one who knows what to do, but does not do it. That is why knowledge brings responsibility and accountability. In that sense, sin is doubly sinful for those who knew better what to do and did not. In the same way, failure is doubly blameworthy for those who had every chance to do well and did not.

Let us pray, then, that the Lord may help us to work hard for our salvation. Let us prepare our hearts and our lives to the mystery of his return by being ready and in the awaiting mood. May he find us in peace with him, with our neighbor and with ourselves. God bless you all!

**Wisdom 18: 6-9; Hebrews 11: 1-2, 8-19; Luke 12: 32-48**



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