

19th Sunday per Annum - C
Wisdom 18:6-9;
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-12;
Luke 12:32-48
Little Flower - 8/7/16

My Brothers and Sisters,

When I sit down to prepare a homily, I usually look for one or more unifying themes in the readings. This week, however, several individual verses stood out. Today, therefore, I want to focus on these verses.

The first verse that stood out was the opening verse of the second reading: *“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”* As I struggled with the meaning of this verse, I remembered that Archbishop Tobin defined faith as “the capacity to be surprised by God.” He said,

If you look at Scripture, it is full of a lot of surprised people, people in exile, people forgotten, a world that thought that God lived worlds beyond the last star, only to discover that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son....We allow God to surprise us because we know that God is faithful.

The following verse also supports Archbishop Tobin’s definition of faith: *“Because of it [i.e., faith] the ancients were well attested.”* In other words, the heroes of the Old Testament were a testament to this faith. The author then focuses on Abraham, whom St. Paul calls our father in faith, who set out on a journey for an unknown and an unknown future with only God’s word of promise to guide him. Like Abraham, we are called to entrust our lives and our futures to God and to God’s word of Promise, Jesus Christ.

For most of us, our families and our church community are testaments to faith. Those of us who were raised in Catholic or Christian families can look to the faith of our parents and grandparents and even great-grandparents to support our own faith. Many of us who have always been Catholic or Christian believe at least partially because we witnessed the faith of our parents and extended family.

The faith of those who have come into the Church from families where faith was not important is often rooted in the faith of the church community in and through which they came to believe. They look to our church family for support in our faith. They see how the lives of the members of our church family have been positively impacted by their faith.

Today’s Gospel is a continuation of last Sunday’s Gospel. Three verses in today’s Gospel stand out for me. At the end of the first part of the Gospel, Jesus said, *“For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”* How true this is! This verse challenges us to ask ourselves whom or what do we value. Who or what is most important to us? Whom or what do we love most of all?

Jesus also said, *“You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”* More than anything, this verse reminds us of the fragility of our own lives and the lives of others. Jesus calls us to cherish life and relationships, to live life and relationships fully every day.

Finally, Jesus said, *“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”* This is the meaning of stewardship. God asks us to generously share our gifts with others. Archbishop Tobin defined stewardship as “What you do, with what you have, when you believe in God.”

My brothers and sisters, this week please think about these five verses.