

19th Sunday per Annum - C
Wisdom 18:6-9;
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-12;
Luke 12:35-40
Little Flower - 8/11/19

My Brothers and Sisters,

In 1997, Cardinal Avery Dulles published a book entitled *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith*. The title comes from the first verse of today's second reading. In this book, he reminds us that there are several models or dimensions of faith.

When we think of faith, many of us think of the content of faith. In other words, our Catholic faith consists of what we believe. We can find the basic content of Christian and Catholic faith summarized in the ancient creeds such as the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed, which we recite at almost every Sunday Mass. The Nicene Creed at Mass is part of our response to God's Word in Scripture. Traditionally, we as Catholics have focused primarily on the content of our faith, what we believe.

However, in his writings, St. Paul focuses less on the content of faith and more on the act of believing. According to St. Paul, Abraham is our father in faith. Today's reading from Hebrews gives us an insight into Abraham's faith. Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldees. One day God appeared to him and asked him to leave Ur and set out on a journey for a land that God would show him and give him. Think about what God was asking him to do.

God was asking him to give up the security of his homeland, of all that was familiar, and to set out on a journey for an unknown land and an unknown future. All he had to go on was God's promise that he would show him the way. In other words, he was being asked to give up the search for security and to confidently entrust his life and his future to God with only God's Word of promise to guide him. This same faith enabled him to entrust his life and his future to God when God promised that Sarah would have a child despite their old age and her sterility and when God subsequently demanded that he sacrifice his son Isaac.

My sisters and brothers, Abraham's faith was a radical faith. This is the faith to which we are called. Like Abraham, we are called to give up the search for security and to entrust our lives and futures to God and to God's Word of promise, Jesus Christ.

This reading, however, also reveals another dimension of faith. As we heard, "*By faith Abraham obeyed...*" If we believe in God, if we believe God, and if we have confidence that God will fulfill his promises to us, then an essential dimension of faith is that we respond to God's call in our lives as Abraham did when God called him to leave Ur and when God called him to sacrifice his son Isaac. We are called to respond to the demands of faith in our lives. In his First Letter, for example, St. John defined the primary demands of faith in God: "...we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us" [3:23].

Both the first reading and the Gospel also refer to faith. The reading from the Book of Wisdom refers to the Passover. The Israelites' faith gave them courage. From the time of the Apostles until the present, martyrs have been able to accept martyrdom because their faith included confidence that God would fulfill his promises to them. Our faith should also give us the courage and confidence to do the right thing and become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

My brothers and sisters, in today's Gospel, Jesus said, "*You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.*" Because of our faith, we need not fear the coming of the Lord either at the end of our lives or when he comes in glory. Rather we should look forward to it because when he comes, he will fulfill all of God's promises.