

Our Lady of Lourdes

Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

August 8, 2010

Wisdom 18:6-9

Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

Luke 12:32-40

Deacon Bob Griffin

The central themes of today's readings are a trusting faith in God's promises and being prepared as a follower of Christ. In the Letter to the Hebrews we are given a definition of faith. "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for, and evidence of things not seen." As we think about faith and especially our own faith think about these three questions. First, Have I experienced God as trustworthy, or do I keep my guard up? Do I really trust, especially in difficult times? Second, how would your life be different if you didn't have faith in God? Can you imagine living without faith? Third, how would your life be different if your faith was absolute? Faith is a gift but it is up to us to nurture it, to make it stronger, to live it.

We are called to wait for the Lord. At Mass each Sunday we say "We wait in joyful hope." Often joyful hope is not the way we are waiting. We may wait in anger, anxiety, impatience, resentment or fear. What might we wait for in joyful hope? perhaps a vacation, a bonus check, a visit from a loved one, or the safe return of a loved one from the war. We are to watch and wait. Without turning your heads would you be able to tell me what the person next to you is wearing? Without checking could you tell me what song we sang as our opening hymn? Do you know the color of the car that parked next to you in the parking lot? These are all insignificant things but how much of life do we miss. Are we waiting in joyful hope without fear?

In the Gospel Jesus tells his disciples and you and I "Do not be afraid any longer, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom." Jesus tells us often in Scripture to not be afraid. He knows there can be much that gives us worry or fear but he reassures us that he is always with us. Here is where those questions about our faith come in.

He also tells us to get ready and to stay ready for "the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected time." This is referring to the Second Coming of our Lord but it also refers to our own departure from this earth. Jesus tells us how to prepare for that coming by building the kingdom of God now on this earth. He says, "Sell your possessions and give alms...for where your treasure is there your heart will be."

For where your treasure is there your heart will be. This is not language of this world it is God's language. The world says "Grab all the gusto you can, look out for Number One" I saw a bumper sticker the other day that expresses this sentiment, "If it doesn't feel good why do it?" The world says it's all about me. Jesus turns this upside down he says it is all about everyone else, "Sell your possessions and give alms." Without faith this makes no sense.

The word alms is translated from a word that means "to be gracious", or "to show mercy", or "to feel sympathy." Christ calls us to prepare his kingdom by being generous. When we are generous to people in need we are blessed with a joyful heart. Happiness in God's kingdom is not about spending, or saving it is about giving. We need to remember that not

every needy person is poor. There are lonely people who need someone to talk to. There are young people who need role models and someone to coach their team. There are elderly people who need a ride to the doctor or to church. There are single parents who could use support and help with their children once in a while. When we give of ourselves we are helping to bring about the kingdom of God.

A number of years ago, Mother Theresa visited Australia. A young Franciscan friar was assigned to accompany her. He was thrilled to have an opportunity to learn from such a famous person. He was disappointed because she was always surrounded by people so he never got a chance to talk to her. He devised a plan. Mother Theresa was to fly to New Guinea so he asked if he paid his way could he sit next to her so he could talk to her and learn from her. Mother Theresa asked him "Do you have enough money to pay the airfare?" He said yes. She said, "then give the money to the poor you will learn more from that than anything I can tell you." Jesus tells us "Sell your possessions and give alms."

In the Gospel we are told to be ready. Jesus also tells us "It's your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," being ready means that we are to cooperate in bringing about the kingdom of God in our community and in our lives. In just a few minutes we will hear from some young people in our parish who had just such an experience of bringing about the kingdom of God.