

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

A holy pastor of a very large parish died and went to Heaven. He was convinced that he would get the penthouse in Heaven. "If not I, then who?", he thought, not so humbly, to himself. Instead, he was given a tiny one-bedroom apartment. Disappointed and not a little angry, the preacher asked St. Peter why he couldn't have the penthouse. St. Peter replied, "We have lots of pastors and preachers like you here in Heaven, and the conveniences in your apartment surpass everything available to the rich and famous people on earth." "Then who is in the penthouse?" the pastor demanded. "It's a lawyer," replied St. Peter. "What?! Why?!" Peter replied, "Until now, we haven't had one here!"

Dear Friends,

Faithfulness and watchfulness are the key words of today's liturgy. We need to be careful but not fearful. There are a lot of things on social media that make us afraid of using it. Not only in social media, are these fears, but in other fields also. Take Covid, it is still around, and health professionals have different views about Covid. But one thing they have in common is they say, "don't be afraid, be cautious". Bishop Ricken used to repeat the words of Pope John Paul II, "Don't be afraid".

The first reading from the Book of Wisdom, talks about the later generation's remembrance of the Passover and faithfulness of the forefathers. The ancestors were well prepared for Passover since they had known about it ahead of time. They put their faith in God and God's fidelity was proven in the salvation of Israel from Egypt. They could see that God was in favor of them and they were glorified. The later generation were not only the beneficiaries, but also have acquired courage to live the faith and be vigilant.

In the second reading from the Letter to Hebrews, the author brings an explanation for faith. The word faith brings several meanings, but it ultimately means the relationship between God and ourselves. In both Hebrew and Greek 'faith signifies faithfulness. Here the author has quoted two kinds of relationships. The relationship between God and the individuals, and the relationship between God and the community. For being faithful, Abraham got back Isaac as a symbol. Through Isaac, the descendants got back the land as a symbol. God was faithful in his promises.

In the gospel, Jesus taught his disciples to be vigilant and faithful. He gave two examples of how they need to be vigilant. Jesus talks to them about sharing. Mother Theresa said that it is very important for us to realize that love, to be true has to hurt. It hurt Jesus to love us, it hurt him. She said to the donors, "I don't want you to give to me from your abundance, I want you to give to me until it hurts". This would be the real meaning of

sharing. Secondly Jesus talked about being faithful to oneself. He clearly insists being faithful in action. Mother Theresa would say, "Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person. Be faithful in small things because it is in them that strength lies".

The stronger our faith is, it will cast out our fear. There will be struggles in our life. We are able to face it because of our strong faith. A good example is the faith of the Canaanite women in the Gospel of Mathew (15:21-28), The faith of the centurion.

It is a challenge for us to be faithful like Abraham. Faithfulness, like Abraham's, means continuing to follow Jesus' pattern of loving service, no matter the trials and challenges that we face.