

19th Sunday Ordinary Time Year “C”
August 6-7, 2016

An inexhaustible treasure in heaven

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

Twelve years ago, when I spent the summer studying Latin at the U of Chicago, I was privy to many political discussions among class members. In an election year, it was clearly the most popular topic each day. I remained mostly silent because I was there solely to study and also because I disagreed with 90% of what I was hearing.

Towards the end of the summer, I wound up in a discussion for 30 minutes about all sorts of topics. With all due respect, I explained to the young Ph.D student that my lack of active involvement in politics should not be interpreted to mean that I cared little about the country. Rather, I revealed that I look at the world from a fundamentally different perspective than he.

I elaborated. While not diminishing in any way the importance of the government process, we cannot and should not look to any politician to be the “savior” of the country. Our whole lives are predicated on the belief that our true home is in heaven.

While I still would hold to that conviction, I have also come to appreciate the vital importance of people being actively engaged in the civic processes of our country, our state and even our local communities regarding immigration, religious liberty, standards for law enforcement, and of course the right to life. Here, you as faithful members of the laity must take your rightful place.

In our first reading from the Book of Wisdom, we are privy to a brief summary of the Passover event, as the author notes that the people had “awaited the salvation of the just and the destruction of their foes.” Yes, the people were waiting for the Lord to come to destroy their enemies, but it generally does not work that way.

Jesus Christ has already won the victory over sin and death, but through his gift of free will, God has given to us the ability to transform society by means of our lives of faith put into practice. These four walls, far from insulating us from the world, in fact prepare us to exit more fully prepared to engage it.

Indeed, while we must be vigilant, as mentioned in today's gospel, we do so with a fundamental belief about our perspective. At the time of the Passover, the people awaited the night— at least it was known to them. What we await today is largely *unknown* to us—we have not been promised an hour of our knowing. We are called to be vigilant each one of our days.

Our reading from the Letter to the Hebrews provides us with what I believe is the best definition for faith I have seen: “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”

Faith is a *realization*—in other words, faith has a goal, it has a definite *content*, it is not simply a ‘shot in the dark.’ Nor is it blind. It is guided, just as Abraham was guided. He obeyed when he was called to go out to a foreign land; he was called to trust and that he did.

The image used in the Gospel was one of an inexhaustible treasure that awaits in heaven. Later in the Eucharistic Prayer, we will pray to the God who dwells “in unapproachable light,” and who yet invites us to share in the glory of that light.

Faith is that instrument by which we remain grounded, both in this life and in eternal life to which we are called. When our time comes, when the work on this earth is completed, and only then, according to his will, God will call us home. In the meantime, we all have our work cut out for us, and we should embrace the joys and yes, even the remarkable struggles.