

Homily Notes – August 13, 2017 – 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time – A
Readings: 1st Kings 19:9a, 11-13a, Psalm 84, Romans 9:1-5, Matthew 14:22-33.

To be faithful we must know the Christian story of salvation and make it ours.

1. Central Thoughts: The virtue of faith is fundamental to living the Christian life. Elijah lived by faith through the violent ups and downs of his prophetic career, in a cultural situation very similar to our own. St Paul cried out in sorrow for his Jewish people, that they might have faith. Jesus criticized his disciples and Peter for their lack of faith when they were in danger.

2. In order to have faith, we must have a “story” that makes coherent sense of what we believe. Jesus expected the disciples to weather the storm through faith, for he had previously criticized them for being “men of little faith” when he calmed the storm (Mt 8:23ff). Then he criticizes Peter as one “of little faith” who had doubted. He was hard in demanding faith. They didn’t yet understand “the story.”

On the Readings:

3. O.T.: Background to Elijah: After Solomon’s death (922 BC), the northern tribes broke away from Judah, from its priests and from the Temple in Jerusalem. They formed an independent country they called Israel, whose capital was Samaria. As years rolled by, many of these Jews lost their faith in Yahweh. Their seventh king, Ahab (869-850 BC), married Jezebel, the daughter of the pagan king of Tyre. He allowed her to build a temple for her god Baal, then encouraged, and himself took part in, idol-worship and immorality. The prophet Elijah was sent by Yahweh to Israel to bring His people back to true worship. Elijah’s **trusting faith** in the power and presence of Yahweh enabled him to defeat and execute the 450 pagan priests of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18: 16-40). Consequently, Queen Jezebel sent murderous henchmen after the prophet. Elijah, after such a great triumph, became deeply discouraged and went into the desert to die. But sustained by food provided by God through an angel, he journeyed for forty days and nights. He finally reached Horeb (Mt. Sinai), the mountain where God had earlier established His covenant with Israel under Moses. God appears not as power nor as a noise but as a whispering voice. Go read and see what the “whispering voice” told him to do!

Read the entire Elijah cycle: See 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2. Note that it is Elisha who is Elijah’s successor.

4. The second reading: In the first eight chapters of his letter to the Romans, Paul describes the blessings which Christ the Messiah, as the fulfillment of "the Law and the prophets," brought to mankind. Deeply moved, Paul (in today’s second reading), cries out in passionate grief for his countrymen, the Jews, because as a nation they have refused to see Christ as the Messiah promised to them by God through their patriarchs and prophets and thus have forfeited their status as God’s chosen people. He was moved by their lack of faith in Jesus.

5. Gospel: This reading shows us the power and divine nature of Jesus, being why Jesus is really worthy of our exclusive faith and trust. Peter’s situation shows how we can be threatened and lose faith. He also shows what our response must be to get back with Jesus.

6. Jesus, as the center point of this story, comes to help his disciples in order to strengthen their faith. This reading shows Christ as the Lord of nature. He “obliges, forces” his disciples to go by boat separate from him. Then he goes into the hills where he can pray alone. From that location he can also see the disciples in the boat on the lake. Note the symbolism. The boat with the disciples is the Church. The storm on the lake is the challenges of the world. He comes to them walking on the water, dominating even the physical forces of the world. He always is watching us.

Here Jesus puts his disciples to the test. But he is there for them. **Now, in our time, will we turn to Jesus and to His story of salvation when the going gets tough, or will we compromise and opt out of faith in order to embrace a more comfortable life in conformity with the world?** As long as we keep our faith in Jesus, we will not sink. Jesus will always come to our aid, repeating, “Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid”.

7. Our response to the Story of Jesus should never be just personal. While our first reaction should be a fervent "Thank You, God," for the true Faith we have received and embraced, **our second thought** should be to ask God to send the light of Faith to those who have never heard and to those who have who have let it be extinguished. It is not enough for a true Christian that he should live his own life according to the laws of Christ. True charity demands that he be seriously interested in the spiritual welfare of his neighbors.

8. What is faith? "Faith is both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God who invites his response, and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed. Faith is both a theological virtue given by God as grace, and an obligation which flows from the first commandment of God. (Catechism of the Catholic Church – Glossary).

9, Biblical definition of faith: Hebrews Chapter 11. "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen." Biblical faith involves assent and obedience (See Jn 3:16, 36, Heb 13:17, Rom 1:5, 16:26). Faith is not just intellectual assent, when we say, "That is true." It is also trusting obedience. Hence we will be judged by our deeds, as they are guided by our faith.

10. Faith and the moral life: Our moral life has its source in faith in God who reveals his love to us. St. Paul speaks of the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5, 16:26) as our first obligation. He shows that "ignorance of God" is the principle and explanation of all moral deviations. Our duty toward God is to believe in him and to bear witness to him (CCC #2087).

11. The First Commandment deals with maintaining our faith. It requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it. There are various ways of sinning against faith:

Failure to profess our faith: By refusing to profess our faith openly whenever the honor due to God requires it or when the good of the neighbor requires it (See Mt 10:32-33; Lk 9:26; Jn 3:36; Acts 4:11-12; Rom 10:10).

Indifferentism is the error of those who hold that one religion is as good as another and that all religions are equally true and pleasing to God.

Infidelity is the unbelief of those to whom the truths of faith have been sufficiently proposed but who nevertheless deliberately refuse to accept them.

Incredulity is the neglect of revealed truth or the willful refusal to assent to it.

Heresy is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same.

Apostasy is the complete abandonment of the Christian faith by those who have been baptized.

Schism is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him (CCC 2088-2089).

12. Having faith requires having a "story" about history and the world, an all-encompassing philosophical outlook that makes sense of everything. This is why all major religions have historic books. Hindus have the Vedas. Moslems have the Koran. The Jews have the Old Testament. Communists have the world-view of Marx and Lenin. We are studying our (Christian) story in The Great Adventure class. Anyone can still join us on Wednesday evening. By doing this you can become clearer on our Christian Story (This Story is our understanding of the world, how it works and how God works in and through it including His plan for our lives).

13. We must make this personal. It is one thing to belong to God through Baptism. It is quite another thing to actually believe in the Christian world view and live a life trusting and obeying God and His Story. So what is the story out of which you live? Is it necessary that a person have a consciously accepted God's story in order to live a Christian life? What about people who do not think about nor strive for any coherent story? Out of what "story" are they living? See examples 5, 6, and 7 on the Application Questions. These questions can be found on our website, our Facebook, or in the back of the song sheet today.

14. How are we personally doing in life? How strong are the storms around us? Are we securely with the boat, the Church, with the presence of Jesus with us? Which story are we actually living out? Do we know the basics of the story well enough? How is your faith in Jesus, now? How well are your children faithful to the Christian story?

15. Act of Faith: O my God, I firmly believe that You are one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. I believe that Your Divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because You have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Application Questions:

- 1. What have I gained out of this Mass which will help me to become the better-version-of-myself that God wants me to become?**
- 2. Am I really being faithful to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior in all aspects of my life? Where might there need to be improvement? Why might I not be faithful in certain, particular areas of my life?**
- 3. What are factors in our culture and in our surroundings that might be affecting me and my family to distance ourselves from God and really not to put our trust and faith in Him? How can we limit our exposure to these influences?**
- 4. In three or four sentences tell why the remembrance of the Presence of God is a great aid in practicing virtue and in avoiding sin.**
- 5. Atlee, a Communist, wants his heaven here upon earth. He claims there is no future life. Is it possible for Atlee to be perfectly happy here on earth?**
- 6. Arthur, the youngest pupil in the seventh grade of St. Mary's school, has a perfect knowledge of this lesson in the Catechism. Why is it true that the young lad is really wiser than a world-famed, proud university professor who denies the existence of God? (Related to this question, how do we as Christians understand what is "wisdom"?)**
- 7. Titus, a fallen-away Catholic is urged by his wife Lulu to attend the parish mission. He angrily replies: "I don't need the mission! I'm okay as I am. I don't harm or injure anyone. I'm a sober and honest man, and I mind my own business! Let me alone!" What important obligations are being neglected by Titus? In what commandments are they contained? (Look at the first three).**
- 8. To have "faith" means that we have a "story" or "world-view" that determines how we behave. To what extent does your "world-view" conform to Christian, biblical reality? What are the consequences if it does not? To what extent do you believe that the typical American youth has any coherent world-view? This is why our class, The Great Adventure is so important for everyone!**
- 9. Does a Catholic know God sufficiently if he can recite the fundamental points of the Catechism or have memorized all of the Ten Commandments?**

A reflection on how to bring up a child with a solid, coherent faith, from Lindworsky, *The Training of the Will*.

"If, however, religion and (specific denomination content) are to be included in the life ideal of the children, especially if our faith is to be the central value of every life ideal, because we are convinced that it alone contain

sufficient motive power for all the resolutions of life, then there will be only one solution of the educational problem from the viewpoint of modern psychology, *and that is, the parochial school.*”

Two conditions to be fulfilled for complete education in the family and at school.

“There must be existent systematic and concentrically arranged value systems; and an individually adjusted ideal of personality must be gained from these value systems. Both conditions may undoubtedly be realized.”

What would this imply for us in our parish in terms of parent and family formation, the strength of the parish’s educational system and the achieving of a parochial school or its equivalent?

We've a Story to Tell to the Nations

1. We've a story to tell to the nations,
that shall turn their hearts to the right,
a story of truth and mercy,
a story of peace and light,
a story of peace and light.

Refrain:

For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
and the dawning to noonday bright;
and Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth,
the kingdom of love and light.

2. We've a song to be sung to the nations,
that shall lift their hearts to the Lord,
a song that shall conquer evil
and shatter the spear and sword,
and shatter the spear and sword.
(Refrain)

3. We've a message to give to the nations,
that the Lord who reigneth above
hath sent us his Son to save us,
and show us that God is love,
and show us that God is love.
(Refrain)

4. We've a Savior to show to the nations,
who the path of sorrow hath trod,
that all of the world's great peoples
might come to the truth of God,
might come to the truth of God.
(Refrain)

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