

Homily Notes for Sunday, August 11, 2019, 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Topic: The Virtue of Faith: both belief and the obedience of faith.

Readings: Wisdom 18:6-9; Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-10; Gospel - Luke 12:32-48.

1. Summary: The message today deals with the virtue of faith, showing how our forefathers in the faith were not afraid but obeyed God with confidence. Jesus is instructing us also that if we are going to serve him as faithful disciples, we must be good stewards of our time, talent and treasure.

Scripture lessons summarized:

2. The first reading cites the Faith-filled preparedness of the ancient Hebrew slaves in Egypt before their mass exodus to the Promised Land. Their trusting faith in God's promises resulted in their liberation.

3. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 33), invites us to express our own confidence in God.

4. In the Second Reading, the author bolsters the Faith of the Jewish Christians by appealing to the example of their ancestors, starting with Abraham, and reviewing the things they had accomplished by Faith.

5. In the Gospel, Jesus challenges his disciples to trust the Father's promise to give them eternal happiness in His kingdom. But they are to be prepared at all times, because the Son of Man will come at an unexpected hour. Using the master-thief parable, Jesus warns us to be on our guard so that the thief (the devil), may not steal our salvation by his temptations. Using the master-servant parable, Jesus reminds us always to be ready, doing the will of God as faithful stewards by using our time, talents and treasure.

7. This message then is that we are called as disciples of Jesus to be faithful to Him, organizing our lives and using our gifts to fulfill his will. One way to check ourselves out is to evaluate, "What do we really treasure?" For Jesus says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Helpful resources concerning faith.

8. Definition from CCC: "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. It is this revelation of God which the Church proposes for our belief, and which we profess in the Creed, celebrate in the sacraments, live by right conduct, and respond to in our prayer of faith. Faith is both a theological virtue given by God as grace, and an obligation which flows from the first commandment of God (See CCC 26,142, 150, 1814, 2087).

9. Act of Faith: "O My God, I firmly believe that You are one God in three Diving Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; 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 teachers because You have revealed them, You Who can neither deceive nor be deceived." Can you say this honestly?

Real challenge here is responding to the profound moral teachings of the Church, even when they might not make sense to us. Ex. Lying, cheating, gossip. Not welcoming or caring for new people. Ex. Right use of money and possessions. All the matters of sexual ethics. What other topics are priests and deacons fearful of preaching on? Note that the Church attempts to take into account the long-term effects and consequences of moral decisions, not just the immediate, apparent results.

10. Apologetics: Passages relating to faith and the necessity of works accompanying them: When talking about faith from a Catholic perspective we must recognize that “faith alone” is not accurate. To be correct we must have both works and faith together. See the following passages that illustrate that: John 3:16 ..."so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." That belief (faith) includes obedience, compare John 3:16 and John 3:36: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever **disobeys** the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.” Note that the opposite of belief here is not disbelief but disobedience. : “To believe” includes both intellectual assent and trusting obedience (See Matthew 7:21-27). Real faith requires both faith and works (Js 2:14-17): “So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” This is why we are concerned about ordering our whole selves, time, talent, and treasure, to serving God.

11. Important challenges: Dealing with faith itself and then with our response in faith: 1) Do we have adequate, clear, and firm belief in the basics of our faith? 2) Dealing with our response to God in faith: This involves all the areas of stewardship, the use of our whole selves, our time, talent and treasure in serving God. Let’s think first about the challenge of belief.

12. One example of the collapse of faith involves the faith of our students on campus? What about the faith of those in our community? Will we and our children have faith? Some sobering statistics.

The situation on campus (at SFA): of 13,000, 2500 at most in Church on Sunday. 5,000 with Christian background, relatively inactive, probably 5,000 who have no contact with the Gospel. Nacogdoches County. Population 67,000. In church 5 – 6,000.

Situation in Corpus Christi diocese: 55,000 youth between 6 and 18 years of age (statistics from Boy Scouts) who identified as being baptized Catholics. In diocese, including Catholic schools and reported catechetical attendees, only 5,000.

The situation in prison: Most young men in prison hear of Jesus first while there.

13. How about the other side of faith, “works” or “trusting obedience?”

How are people doing morally, at least in regards mortal sins? Are we treating people with dignity and respect? Are we being honest in our relationships and in our studies? What about money and debt? Are we making special efforts to welcome newcomers to our Church? To what extent can we provide a Catholic Christian education for our youth?

14. Our Response:

Example of our support of one of our members, Pete Mendolia, who was active for many years as a Knight of Columbus. We are offering the Saturday evening Mass for Pete, his health and his family. Special values with the Knights: Unity, charity, fraternity, patriotism. Why don’t we do this with everyone? Not related enough?

15. Final Question: What would it take for each of us to grow in genuine faith? Where are our challenges? Where are opportunities? I believe that most of the world is looking for Christians who truly live their faith and are making a difference. In many ways we are. Where do we need to improve?