

## Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

### Faith

August 11, 2019

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What is faith? Our first two readings speak a great deal about faith. But what do they mean by it? Some associate faith with having no doubts. That to have faith is to be sure. However such a faith is really a fragile faith, a blind faith that the slightest uncertainty can disturb. True faith, biblical faith is not about being free from doubt, true faith is about fidelity, about remaining faithful, even despite our doubts. The first reading associates faith with commitment and the courage that comes from a committed heart.

As I have mentioned before, creed comes from the Latin “cor”—meaning “heart” and do “I give.”—my creed is that to which I give my heart. Faith then is only secondarily about what we believe, it is primarily about how we live, it is less about what may or may not be true, it is more about whether we are true, true to the one to whom we have pledged our hearts.

And so when Paul speaks of faith in today’s second reading he speaks of a person, Abraham, summoned by God to a land he knew not. Where is God summoning our hearts? Where is our promised land? By faith Abraham was fruitful. When he was so old, he was “as good as dead,” he became father to descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands of the seashore. Now I do not want to speculate on how old counts as being “as good as dead” but the point is that through faith what seemed impossible became possible, for as the angels tell Sarah who laughs when they foretell that she will bear a son in her old age, nothing is impossible with God. May we dare to hope that our faith might also be fruitful? May we dare to hope that through faith what may today seem impossible in our lives might yet become possible, real, actual. That something wonderful, or to use the Latin word, miraculous, might yet happen even to us?

In the gospel Jesus exhorts us to keep the faith. But to do so we must stay awake, remain alert, so that when God comes calling, we are ready, free to respond with all our hearts. We must be wary of being distracted by things that do not really matter. We must be careful not to have our lives cluttered with what will ultimately only get in our way, or tie us down. We must take care not to let our desire for things that don’t matter so much obstruct our care for people who do; not to let the pleasures of the moment dull our senses such that we do not hear the Lord when he knocks, or do not see him when he passes by. For his knock can be very soft. And he may pass by in the person of someone we can easily overlook.

Faith takes attentiveness. And attentiveness takes practice. It is the regular practice of prayer day in and day out, week after week that can keep us awake and alert, that can keep us attentive to what is important and away from what only gets in the way. It is by putting our faith into action through our reaching beyond ourselves to family and friends, such as Mary Raqua, mourning the passing of her husband Ron this week, neighbors, such as those who frequent Suncrest’s food pantry, or even strangers, such as Dawn’s families coping with autism and the sons and daughters of outcast scavengers from far away India, it is by such recollection and outreach that our faith remains relevant, vital, and true. And it is by keeping our faith alive, that we remain faithful not only to God but to ourselves as well, for ultimately God’s call is to our own true self, who we are in God’s sight. And by being alive to God’s call, by being attentive to his presence in our

lives that we may be heralds of that same divine presence in those around us, and so in keeping the faith, we may spread the faith, and so become companions in that faith, companions of Jesus laboring together to further God's own work of creation, realizing our hopes, making the impossible possible, and building the Kingdom of God.