

Nineteenth Sunday Ordinary Time

Some people long to return to the “good old days”. As if the past was almost perfect and had no flaws. Some want to return to the place that they grew up. They have those fond memories of their childhood homes and would like to go back there. My uncle returned a few years ago to his childhood hometown in Nebraska. He figured it would be the last time that he would ever get back there. He was surprised at how small his hometown was. What he remembered as a child taking a long time to cross over town to get from one side to the other, only took him a short walk as an adult. He couldn’t believe how small the town was.

In our second reading from the letter to the Hebrews (11:1-2, 8-19) it talks about Abraham leaving his homeland and going where God commanded him to go. Abraham at the time was 75 years old. He had a nice comfortable life and was considered a wealthy man. He probably figured that he would die there as his ancestors had. Yet, God asked Abraham to leave the well-known and comfortable past behind and venture out into an unknown future to a distant land. Abraham did as God had asked, and he trusted that God would take care of him and protect him. As we know from Scripture, God did fulfill His promises to Abraham.

Sometimes, like Abraham, we have to make a leap of faith and put everything in God’s hands trusting that He will take care of us. Many of us are probably living a comfortable life and have no desire to change anything. I would suppose that many expect to live out their final days at home, and for some this will happen. Others may be asked to change and move to different environments. This may be something that some people don’t like and don’t want to do. However, it happens. Do we trust that God will guide us and take care of us no matter what the future has in store for us?

Of course, a greater understanding of these readings points to a higher calling. They point to that heavenly homeland that God is calling us to. In our Gospel reading (Lk 12:32-48) we heard Jesus say, “Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.” God has this fantastic kingdom planned for us in heaven. Like Abraham, He is inviting us to journey toward it. God is making us promises too, that if we trust in Him and do what He asks of us then He will fulfill the promises – like He fulfilled the promises that He made to Abraham.

This journey to our heavenly homeland is a long one. It’s arduous, filled with many potholes, diversions, and seemingly endless road construction projects which can cause agonizing delays. This sounds like driving anywhere on I-5, especially if you have to drive north to the Seattle area. We want to avoid these delays, but the only way to get to our destination is to go through them. There are no backroads or shortcuts available. We just have to get in traffic and grind it out. The road to our final destination requires patience and perseverance. Otherwise, we might be tempted to give up the effort and stay home. If this happens, then we will never make it to that homeland that God has prepared for us.

Unfortunately, many people get lost on this journey. They lose sight of the goal. They might give up because it is too difficult; or they might become complacent. I think that these are two of the primary reasons why some people get lost on their journey of faith. “I give up because it’s too hard, and I don’t want to have to work this hard on my faith.” When we do this, we put down the cross and we go back to the land of slavery where it is nice and comfortable. We want to relax and forget about it. Someone can become complacent. “Ah, it will get done eventually. I’m not worried about it. There is plenty of time.” Some people think this way, even into their 70s, 80s, or even 90s. “Ah, I’ll get around to it sometime.”

In order to successfully complete a long journey it takes perseverance and fortitude. We have to have our eyes firmly fixed on the road ahead, especially as we get closer to the end. We also have to have our hearts firmly fixed on Jesus, who is the way and the truth and the life. If we don't, any number of things can take His place in our hearts. We can easily lose sight of Him and our goal, which is our heavenly homeland. Abraham had his sight fixed on God, and he believed in God's promises. God's promise to us is heaven; and God intends to fulfill that promise to those that are faithful and trust in Him. Despite the challenges and difficulties, God wants us to follow His lead. For those that do, heaven awaits.

What was written in the letter to the Hebrews can apply to us too. We acknowledge ourselves to be strangers and aliens on earth, for those that speak thus show that they are seeking a homeland – a heavenly homeland. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a kingdom for them.

The words of the opening prayer for Mass are important to remember. "Almighty ever-living God, whom, taught by the Holy Spirit, we dare to call [you] our Father, bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters so that we may merit to enter into the inheritance which you have promised. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.