

HOMILY SUNDAY 19 – C (Homily 02)

“Faith, Freedom and Service”

(Wisdom 18:6-9; Psalm 33; Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19; Luke 12:32-48)

On one of his trips to Canada from Brazil where Paul Ehle OMI was stationed as an Oblate missionary, a brother Oblate apologized to him for not staying more in touch with him over the years. Fr. Ehle’s reply took this Oblate by surprise. He simply responded with a Portuguese saying, that what we spend our time and money on is what is important to us.

The readings today encourage us to make faith in Jesus a priority in our lives; a faith that will lead to personal transformation, inner freedom and humble service.

The faith of Abraham, our father in faith, is the model that is set before us in the second reading. His faith in God’s providence was so strong that he was able to offer his only son, in whom lay the promise of the future, as a sacrifice. Abraham’s faith was strong enough to set out into the unknown, relying on God to show him the way, on the way. Abraham put his faith in the Word of God in an exemplary way that challenges us to this day to do the same.

For its part, the Book of Wisdom, in the first reading, lays the foundation for the mission of Jesus. The author somehow intuitively knows what the coming Savior would be all about. He writes that the deliverance from Egypt and destruction of their enemies was foretold and expected. He adds that God then called the people to himself and glorified them.

Those words accurately describe the mission of Jesus that was to redeem and sanctify; to forgive and to heal. In the words of the first reading, the mission of Jesus was to deliver and to glorify. And that is what he did through his birth, life, death and resurrection.

The Gospel then shows us Jesus in action, preaching and teaching the people how the gift of faith in him should be expressed. We have been delivered from sin through his passion and death on the cross; we must now accept the Kingdom of God as a gift and learn how to live within that Kingdom.

Our faith in him is expressed by freedom from attachment to material things and to other things like addictions in our lives. If our faith in him is strong, we will practice the spirituality of letting go, of giving our possessions and our lives away in loving service of our fellow human beings. That is the real test of our faith. Can we be generous in giving alms, and be generous in giving away our time and talent in loving service?

Jesus is Lord, Savior and Liberator. He has forgiven us and healed us and now we must live in the reign of God through faith, love and humble service. That is the way to the eternal wealth of peace, joy, justice and security that he alone can give us.

Robert Moore, in his book *Facing The Dragon*, describes how modern humanity has tried to do away with spirituality, with especially the teachings of the Church on poverty, chastity and obedience. What the modern world wants and is obsessed with is wealth, sex and autonomy. What it has unwittingly unleashed by ignoring the wisdom of our ancestors in faith, and the teachings of Jesus through the Church, is devastating infantile grandiosity and selfish narcissism that threatens to destroy the very creation that God has given us.

The choice is ours: We can choose to continue on a foolish, misguided path to wilfull self destruction, or we can put our faith in Jesus, follow his teachings, and willingly learn to live in his reign in freedom, peace, joy and humble service, like the servants attentive to the masters wishes and to his return.

There are signs of hope in our world. Recently, at the G20 summit, Canada kept its commitment to an extra \$1.5 billion aid to poor countries because we are better off financially than the other G-8 countries. Britain for its part is cutting back on other items but also keeping its commitment to the poorer countries. These are hopeful gospel signs that reflect the teachings of today's readings.

On a more local level, a young couple struggling to follow Jesus is challenged to make some changes in their lives. The father needs to let go of an addiction to pornography that is troubling his wife. On the other hand, she needs to open up and share her feelings with her husband which is frustrating him, something she is afraid to do because of her family background. If their faith grows to the point that they experience mutual

forgiveness and healing and give themselves to each other in a deeper way, serve each other as God wants them to, they will experience intimacy and that wealth in heaven which is the presence of Jesus in their lives right here and now.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is the result of the trust that Jesus had in the Father, and his subsequent total gift of his life for us on the Cross.

May we who hear his Word and receive his Body and Blood today grow in faith and be motivated to worship him and serve one another in freedom and love.