

## HOMILY for 19<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

Many years ago the northern lights were much more brilliant. One night a young man went out & saw them shining brightly. He assumed that they signaled the end of time. He ran through his community admonishing the people to wake up. He arrived at the house of an old man & began pounding on the door.

“Get up!” he shouted. “The day of judgment has come!”

“Go back to bed,” the old man grumbled. “Who ever heard of the day of judgment coming in the middle of the night?”

Anyway, we sure don’t know when the Day of Judgment or the Last Day will come. Many early Christians thought that, after Jesus’s death and resurrection, He would return immediately & establish His rule and kingdom on earth. He would carry out His judgment & put an end to all His enemies. That is the context of this Sunday’s Gospel. That’s why we’ve heard something like this in this Sunday’s Gospel: “...Be like people awaiting their master’s return from a Wedding so that when he arrives & knocks, you will open for him without delay. It will go well with those servants whom the Master finds wide-awake on his return... Be on your guard, therefore. For the Son of Man will come when you least expect of him.” The Gospel continues, “...That servant is fortunate whom his master finds busy when he returns. Assuredly, his master will put him in charge of all his property. But, if the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking his time about coming,’ & begin to abuse the housemen & servant girls, to eat & drink & get drunk, that servant’s master will come back on a day when he does not expect him, at a time he does not know. He will punish him severely & rank him among those undeserving of trust.”

What we just heard highlights the prominent thinking of the early Church, namely, it was preparing for the immediate return of the Lord. The people might not know the exact time & day of His return. But, they were warned to be prepared for that unexpected-&-immediate return of the Lord. If they don’t heed that warning & keep on living a dissolute life, they’d be caught with the mistreatment of others & be punished for it. If they take that warning seriously, they’d live according to the Lord’s Commandments & try to treat everyone with love & respect. Once they do that, they’d always be ready for the return of the Lord. It does not matter when the Lord might return, they will always be ready to welcome Him & make Him proud by their way of life.

It’s been over two thousand years; & the Lord has not returned yet. Some Christians might take that as the sign that the Lord would not return at all. Thence, they begin to ignore the Lord’s Commandments & treat their neighbors horribly. They think that no one would know what they’re doing & hold them accountable for all their actions. They might not even take the Lord’s teachings seriously & begin to follow a bad way of life. They think that they’re not responsible for anything. They mistakenly assume that they can do whatever they want & would not worry about its consequences. That’s what we see happening in our world every day. But, the Lord reminds us in today’s Gospel to avoid that attitude & that way of life. We need to be responsible for our actions & prepared for the return of the Lord. Otherwise, we’ll be caught off-guard & be punished severely for our misdeeds.

How can we keep ourselves focused on the return of the Lord & live up to His expectation in this challenging world? Most of us honestly find it difficult to focus on the return

of the Lord after two thousand years & also not knowing exactly about that time & that date. Our attention span is short & limited. We have tough time remember what we just heard in last Sunday's Homily, let alone keeping our attention intensely on the return of the Lord 24/7. Furthermore, we're expected to live up to our Lord's Commandments & teachings amidst all the temptations & challenges of this world. Most Catholics still find it difficult to come back to church every Sunday after three plus years of Covid-19. They'd rather watch television & go shopping than spending one hour in church each weekend. The world continues to tell everyone to search for pleasures, instant gratification, wealth, power, glamor, popularity, & other worldly things. Most of us find it hard to resist those worldly temptations & follow the virtuous ways of life. So, what must we do to stay close to our Lord in this world & rewarded abundantly on His return?

The answers for those questions can be found in this Sunday's Second Reading. It says, "Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, & conviction about things we do not see. Because of faith, the people of old were approved by God. By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called, & went forth to the place that he was to receive as a heritage... By faith, he sojourned in the Promised Land as in a foreign country... By faith, Sarah received power to conceive though she was past the age, for she thought that the one who had made the promise was worthy of trust. As a result of faith, there came forth from one man, who was himself as good as dead, descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky & the sands of the seashore." So, faith evidently helped the people of God in ancient time to put their lives in God's hand while trying to follow God's Commandments. Faith kept them focused on the Lord without being distracted by worldly distractions & daily challenges. Hopefully we'd rely on faith to help us live up to our Lord's expectation & prepare well for His return.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus has this message for us in today's Gospel, "...Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be." Jesus is absolutely right about that message. If our treasure is here on earth, we'd focus our attention & effort on this world. But, if our treasure is in Heaven, we'd certainly prepare ourselves for the second return of our Lord to be taken up there & try to live up to His expectation no matter when that day of His return might be.