

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

This Sunday's Gospel talks about preparing for the Second Coming of our Lord & the Last Day. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this brand-new cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A Bible study group was discussing the Apocalypse & the possibility of sudden death. "We will all die someday," the leader of the discussion said, "and none of us really knows when, but if we did, we would all do a better job of preparing ourselves for that day." Everyone nodded their heads in agreement with this comment.

"What would you do if you knew you only had four weeks of life left before your great judgment Day?" The leader asked the group.

"For those four weeks, I would go out into my community & witness to those that have not yet accepted Jesus into their lives," one person said.

"A very wise thing to do," said the group leader. And all the group members agreed that would be a very good thing to do.

"For those four weeks, I would dedicate all of my remaining time to being of more service to others," said another woman.

"That's wonderful!" the group leader commented, & all the group members agreed.

One gentleman in the back finally spoke up loudly. "For those four weeks, I would travel throughout the United States with my mother-in-law in an economy car, & stay in a cheap motel every day.

Everyone was puzzled by his answer. "Why would you do that?" the group leader asked curiously.

"Because," the man smiled sarcastically. "It would be the longest four weeks of my life!"

Anyway, we sure don't know when the Last Day will be. We certainly have no idea when we'll have to meet the Lord in person. That is why Jesus has this advice for us in this Sunday's Gospel, "...Gird your loins & light your lamps & be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes & knocks. Blessed are servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival... You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." That is a wonderful advice & a serious warning to us. But, the question for us is this, "Would we take Jesus' warning & advice seriously?"

Most of us usually do not like to think about the Last Day. The last thing we want to be prepared for is the end of the world, or the end of our lives on earth for that matter. But, as you might know, if something has a beginning, it sure will have an end. So, if we were created in this world, we will certainly have an end. That is why we better prepare ourselves for that inevitable end. For we do not want to face the Judge of the living & the dead unprepared, & thence we will regret & receive harsh judgment from Him. We have seen how some people, especially the wealthy & the powerful, have ended up with an untimely death. Unlike other Final Exams, the one that we all will have to take at the end of our lives on earth could only be taken once. If we fail it, or find ourselves unprepared for it, we cannot re-take it. That is why we better focus our hearts & souls on that important Final Exam & get ourselves prepared well for it. Otherwise, we'll have to face our Lord's harsh judgment on the Last Day & end up in the fiery & teeth-grinding place.

However, the Lord's Judgment is not the only thing we'll have to face on the Last Day. We will also meet our Lord face to face on the Last Day. The early Church thought that Jesus would return in glory right away & take them along to His home in Heaven. Unfortunately, it has been over two thousand years; & Jesus has not returned yet. But, it should not be an excuse for us to live a dissolute life & violate all His Commandments. For He might come back at an unexpected time & find us follow the way of life contrary to our Lord's Command. He would be not only disappointed but also punish us severely. Here I am reminded of a similar situation with the chicken of our parish. When they were baby chicks, we forgot to put the light in the chicken coop on the timer to turn it off at night. So, when the older chicken got back into their dark section of the coop to sleep, the baby chicks were running wild & having a good time in their lighted-up section of the coop. I would stop at night to check on the baby chicks to make sure they were alright. Realizing they were being watched, the baby chicks would instinctually freeze in their tracks & pretend not to move for a couple of minutes. Busted! That is how we would feel if the Lord catches us unprepared & doing things contrary to His command & wishes.

Surely our journey to the Kingdom of Heaven is an arduous & committed experience. It is not for the faint of heart or a non-committed person. It is similar to how the people of God had journeyed to the Promised Land. This Sunday's Second Reading/the Letter to the Hebrews describe that experience for us as following, "Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, & conviction about things we do not see... By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the Promised Land as in a foreign country, dwelling in the tents with Isaac & Jacob, heirs of the same promise; for he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose designer & maker is God." So, faith helped Abraham & his descendants overcome lots of challenges along the way & stay focused in their search for the Promised Land. They did not get discouraged easily in the face of their daily challenges & persecutions. They did not get distracted & lured easily by worldly things & the politics of their time. For they relied on faith & protection & guidance of the Lord to move forward & find the way to the Promised Land. After forty long years, they were able to find the land flowing with milk & honey & begin to build a just & prosperous community for the people of God. Hopefully we would follow their example & rely on faith to help us find the way to the Kingdom of Heaven in spite of all the challenges & distractions along the way. Without faith, we might abandon that journey & our loving God altogether when facing some challenges in our lives. Without faith, we might be lured by worldly things & empty promises of earthly leaders. Hopefully we will depend on faith to guide & help us to make it to the Kingdom of God on the Last Day.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus left with His disciples a wise reminder in this Sunday's Gospel, "... wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be." So, if our treasure is Jesus & the Kingdom of Heaven, our hearts & focus will always be on those. We will do everything possible to stay close to Jesus & win a place in the Kingdom of Heaven after this life. On the other hand, if our treasure is worldly things & this life, our heart & concentration will be about things of this life. Let's keep our eyes focus on the Treasure that will bring us true happiness & benefits beyond this life.