

# SPIRITUAL LIFE

## 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Faith and Christian Life

By: Fr. Joseph Pellegrino

This Sunday's reading begins with a wonderful definition of faith. "Faith is the confident assurance concerning what we hope for and the conviction about the things we do not see." The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews was not talking about dogma, definitions of various items in our belief system. He was talking about lifestyle. The lives of people of faith reflect their whole value system, their whole system of life.

The people to whom the Letter to the Hebrews was addressed were floundering in their faith. They had lost their initial fervor. They were threatened by persecution. Following of Christ was becoming all too much for them. They had to give up much of the pagan lifestyle that their neighbors enjoyed. The writer of Hebrews tells them to lift up their drooping hands and firm up their wobbly knees. He tells them that if they really have faith, they will grow closer to God through their Christian lifestyle. But they had to believe. They could not give up.

We have to believe. We cannot give up. It is so easy for us to choose actions that do not reflect our faith and then claim that God really is not concerned with what we have done. When we do this we are denying that we have a personal relationship with God. For if we think that God is not concerned about our every action, then we are saying that God is not personally concerned with us.

Perhaps we don't go to this extreme. Perhaps we just water our relationship to God down by forming a god in our own minds that allows a little deviation every now and then from the norm of Christian morality. Sometimes we create a god in our minds that thinks it is quite all right for us to behave immorally. We say that if God loves us he won't punish us for our actions, but we refuse to recognize that our actions render us incapable of allowing the love of God into our lives. We punish ourselves to the pain of a loveless life for all eternity when render ourselves incapable of bearing the love of the Lord.

People are condemned to hell because they condemn themselves to hell. They don't believe in any god other than some Barney figure their minds create who will sing "I love you and you love me," to them for all eternity. They do not see the contradiction between the faith they profess and the life they lead. We are all inclined to do this.

God is not a purple dinosaur. He is not Bayney. He is not a creation of our minds. He is the real spiritual Father who calls us to love him, to serve him, to make his life real in the world.

One time I told a priest in confession that I kept returning to the same sins. I think most everyone here has told the same thing to a priest. The priest told me something that was very

wise. He said, "Your faith must be weakening. Pray for an increase in faith and the ability to fight sin will follow."

We do not have several facets of our spiritual lives. We do not have faith over here and morality over there. We are whole. We are one. We must be people of a living faith.

We believe that God formed each of us for a unique mission. We may not know what this exact mission is yet, but we have faith that the God who gave us this call will help us carry out his will. He has a reason for our existence. We can only live meaningful lives by allowing him to lead us to complete his rationale for creating us.

Faith is the confident assurance concerning what we hope for the conviction about the things we do not see. We do not know what God wants of each of us, we cannot read the directions for every move he wants us to make in our lives. But we do know that we cannot fail in completing his mission for us as long as we stay united to him in every aspect of our lives.

Faith is a gift that needs active construction on our parts. It is like a swing set you buy for your kids which is useless unless you put it together. We need to build a faith life. We need to integrate faith into every aspect of our lives. We need to construct our Christianity. Faith is a gift that needs batteries, It only works if we provide the energy.

The Gospel reading speaks about the faithful servant who is not just sitting around saying "I believe that the Master wants me to serve him," but who is actively preparing for the Master's return. We are servants of the Lord. If we really believe in him, we will continually render this belief real in the world by the living actions of Christianity.

Today we pray for faith, faith to live as Jesus has called us to live.

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## READINGS OF THE WEEK

Wisdom 18:3-9; Hebrews 11:1-19; Luke 12:32-48

August 11, 2013

# 靈 修 生 活

## 常 年 期 第 十 九 主 日

阿 爾 貝、范 諾 怡 樞 機 主 教

在本主日的福音中耶穌一再強調了等待的必要。今天往往也有這個必要。

福音中耶穌多次強調等待的必要。在這個段落中，祂講了僕人等待主人歸來的比喻。

主人出了門，祂要回來，但是不知道祂回來的確切時辰。因此僕人們該當束起腰，點著燈等待，當主人回來的時候立刻給祂開門，讓主人看到他們在等待祂。

另一方面，在回答伯多祿的問題時，耶穌指出了等待主人的一種情況：誰不等待主人的歸來，心想祂會很遲來到，就任意行使各種的自由，在多樣事上濫用職權。一個管家心裡說：「我的主人必然遲來」，於是開始拷打其他僕婢，吃喝醉酒。在不等待主人時候，一切過火的行為都做得出。

等待意味著與要回來的主人有一個預先建立的關係。對等待中的僕人的一件重要事就是與他的主人建立的關係。他預料他的主人提前回來，心裡想的是主人渴望在回來時找到他，他所做的是讓主人真的心滿意足。

對基督徒的生活而言，做好準備是基本的態度：因為我們等待著基督。不是說準備好為了上路，為了去旅行，做好準備是為一個人，所等待的就是上主。

最要緊的是與祂的關係。我們應當常常隨時回應祂要我們做的事，順應祂的願望，常依照祂的渴望，全心全意地去做。

但是，如果我們忘記對天主的這一等待，那麼，我們就會偏離生活的方向，尋求其他的滿足，其他的樂趣，四處奔忙，我們的存在便失去了方向，而這個方向該是引向對天主的愛。

誰若竭盡全力朝而這個方向走，就沒理由擔心上主何時回來：他在等待著上主，為能喜悅地迎接祂。

福音給我們指出，那時上主向他們顯示了一個非凡的慷慨舉動：「主人來到時，遇見醒悟著的那些僕人是有福的。我實在告訴你們：主人要束上腰(即做好進行工作的條件)，請他們坐席，自己前來伺候他們。」主人成了僕人，為伺候祂的僕人。真是個完全料想不到的慷慨舉動啊！

耶穌就這樣讓我們瞭解這就是祂對我們的慷慨舉動。祂毫不猶豫地做了眾僕之僕；作為主人和老師，我們的天主的祂，開始為祂的門徒洗腳，為向他們顯示服務和愛的途徑(若十三 3-7)。事實上，服務和愛應該常在一起：沒有服務，愛就是空的；沒有愛，服務就不是完美的。

我們請求天主賜予常準備祂回來時迎接祂的恩寵。這對我們每個人來說，在死亡的時刻肯定會發生。我們決不能讓自己處在天主的恩寵之外，處在招致天主對我們進行公義判決的處境。

但是，我們也要隨時準備接受我們生命的每一時刻天主給我們的啟示，讓我們的生活永遠符合祂的願望，因此，讓這個生命是美善的，充滿著天主的恩寵所行的善功。

做好準備就是說留意分辨天主的意願，好能按照這些意願去做。基督信徒的生活是何等的美好，在這個生活中與天主的往來永遠存在，並且激起大望德和大愛德！

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 八 月 十 一 日

智 18:3-9； 希 11:1-19； 路 12:32-48