

Nineteenth Sunday of ORDINARY TIME (Year C)

First: Wis 18:3.6-9;

Second: Heb 11:1-2.8-19;

Gospel: Lk 12:32-48

THEME of the READINGS

Waiting faithfully and watchfully. This is the summary of the main content of today's liturgy, the attitude of Abraham and Sarah, and of all those who died waiting for the promise made by God (second reading). This is the attitude of the descendants of the patriarchs, who wait with confidence, in the midst of hard work, for the night of deliverance (first reading). This is the attitude of the Christian in this world, engaged in his everyday tasks, staying awake for his Master's return (Gospel).

DOCTRINAL MESSAGE

The historical wait. God is a faithful God, and his promises are fulfilled. However, his promises are not seen immediately, in the present, but are expected for the future. We can say that the history of salvation is the history of hopes and of the expectation of the Jews and Christians. Abraham is the symbol of hope, as is shown in the Letter to the Hebrews (second reading). At first he lives in the hope and expectation of a son, and God fulfills these hopes by giving him Isaac, in spite

of the fact that Sarah, his wife, is past the age and sterile. Then he waits in the expectation and hope of a land and of numerous descendants. God will fulfill that hope too, but not during Abraham's earthly existence. In this way, in Abraham the chain of hopes and expectations of the patriarchs and of the People of Israel is inaugurated. After several centuries, in the 13th century BC, God fulfilled the promise of the land with Joshua. Many centuries after that, with Jesus Christ, God fulfilled the promise of descendants, as it is only in Jesus that, "All the people of the earth will be blessed." The Book of Wisdom mentions another divine promise: deliverance from slavery, "That night was forewarned to our Fathers" (cf Gn 15:13-14; 46:3-4). God fulfilled this promise in an equally glorious and powerful way that famous night when the Egyptians remained in the dark while the Israelites were preceded by a column of fire which lit up their path, that night that was tragic for the Egyptians because all of their first-borns died, while for the Israelites there was deliverance and joy. Not only does God fulfill his promise, but he also overcomes evil, and with love he attracts and calls the chosen ones to him. He is not only a faithful God, but also a loving Father.

The meta-historical wait. In the Letter to the Hebrews, the patriarchs and the great figures of the People of Israel are portrayed as looking for a homeland. The author of the Letter interprets this quest not in a historical, but in a meta-historical way: "They aspire to a better home, that is, the heavenly home." God himself, who was faithful by fulfilling his promises in history, will be faithful in the hereafter of history. The Gospel especially tells us about this meta-historical expectation and hope, by using the image of the master, whose return the servants must await in order to open the door when he knocks. From his very birth, man has been waiting for his Master in some way. As Christians, we must wait without fear, with joy, because "it has pleased the Father to give you the Kingdom," and God, our Father, will fulfill our expectations. We must wait in an attitude of readiness at all times: "See that you have your belts done up and your lamps lit." Equally, the wait must be a watchful one, for the Lord will come "like a burglar," when you least expect him. The best way to wait is certainly by doing good to all and by maintaining a dignified conduct. Taking advantage of one's power by beating the servants, eating and drinking and getting drunk, is an inappropriate way of waiting for the Lord. This is why the Gospel says to us, "The master will cut him off and send him to the

same fate as the unfaithful." The hereafter, and God's judgment which this reality implies, may seem mysterious to us, inaccessible to our intelligence, but it is not marginal to the Christian faith. Rather, it is one of the elements constituting our creed: "We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." We live by hope, but all of the history of salvation has shown us, century after century, that the hope placed in God will not disappoint us

PASTORAI SUGGESTIONS

Looking at the present with forward-looking eyes. The Christian is not a utopian being, a dreamer cut off from the present down-to-earth reality. Christianity lives the realism of the present, with the small everyday tasks, with the small or large projects, with the struggle for the life and survival of many human beings, with the crime news in the papers or on television, with the little surprises that knock on our door every now and then.

Actually, life is either lived in the present or it is not lived at all. The present is the only time within our reach, for the past has already faded and the future does not yet have a substance of its own. The present is

- the land on which I tread,
- the family in which I live,
- the girl-friend whom I love,
- the sick mother,
- the restless son,
- the office where I work,
- the parish I walk past each day,
- the blood test I've had or
- the new car that I have just bought.

Our gaze must be fixed on this present; we must not escape it; we must accept it in all of its reality, whether it be sad or pleasing. We must not be afraid of the present, we must look at it in the face, with strength.

However, the present does not exist in a water-tight compartment. By its very nature, it is open to the future that step by step, inexorably becomes the present.

We cannot forget about this future in our present everyday life. Hence, we must look at the present with forward-looking eyes. The future is the horizon of the present, it is hope.

A present that is closed dies instantaneously. An open present already glimpses the golden ear of corn in the seed that was just sown in the earth. A closed present seeks to make the blade of grass, of ephemeral happiness, eternal, but this grass withers away, causing catastrophe. An open and Christian present looks ahead, it looks forward and forward until it enters the very dwelling of God. May your eyes enlighten the present reality with the brightness that they have captured looking to the future.

<p>A Closed Present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Seeks to make ephemeral happiness eternal.✗ Dies instantaneously, without future vision.✗ Leads to catastrophe when temporary joys wither.	<p>An Open & Christian Present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Glimpses future hope in present actions (seed to golden ear).✓ Looks ahead, towards the dwelling of God.✓ Enlightens reality with brightness captured from the future.
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Watchfulness is not an option. The future of each person is unpredictable. The weather man may give us a forecast for tomorrow's weather, but there is the risk that he may be wrong. The economist may forecast the level of inflation in the country for the month of May or for the year 2003 with a certain degree of precision.

But the history of human beings is impossible to predict, because it is a history of freedom. Who can tell what people will do tomorrow? Who can foresee God's plans for the immediate or distant future? The unpredictability of the future calls for watchfulness. The prudent and sensible person does not consider a watchful attitude as something that is merely possible, as one among many other options. Watchfulness is the best option.

- We must be watchful so that the future does not take us by surprise.
- We must be watchful in order to master events, rather than being mastered by them.
- We must be watchful to make sure that we never lose peace, not even in the face of the most terrible trials and adversities. Actually, those who are watchful have already looked the future in the eyes, and are ready to face it with grace and determination.
- We must be watchful so as to discover God's writing in the pages of history, to discover the action of the Spirit within us, within people.
- We must be watchful so that we can finish the last page of the book of our life with a happy ending, and preserve the integrity of our faith, hope and charity, "when he will come."

Watchfulness is Not an Option: It's a Vital Need

The unpredictability of the future, both human and divine, calls for constant watchfulness. It's the best strategy to master events and preserve peace.



Don't be surprised by the future.



Master events, don't be mastered.



Preserve peace, even in trials.



Discover God's writing in history.



Finish life's book with a happy ending.



Preserve faith, hope, and charity.