

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year C

Wisdom 18:6-9
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19
Luke 12:32-48

GATHERING

(An unlit candle, an earthenware piece and a cross rest on a cloth-covered table in the gathering place.)

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. The leader invites the community to some time of quiet acknowledgment of the presence of God among them and within them. After some moments of silence, a selection of quiet instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, members pray the Lord's Prayer with hands extended.)

COMMENTARY

For many people, faith is something focused on the future – the end times, life after death, heaven. In this week's scriptures, we hear that faith is actually the "realization of what is hoped for." Faith, says Paul, is the "evidence" of things not seen. *Realization? Evidence?* Those aren't *future words*. Those are *present words*. Abraham is a good example of someone with faith focused in the present. His life is evidence of deep trust in what is "not seen." He left when God called. He took Isaac to the altar when God asked for his son. His faith was so closely linked with his present that he let his faith, his profound trust in God, guide his present.

By Paul's definition, Jesus *is* faith – he is the realization of "what is hoped for," what we hope for. But Jesus, like Abraham, also showed his faith in the things that are not seen. He looked to the past, certainly, and oriented himself in the Jewish world to which he was born. But Jesus

also looked to the future and saw the full realization of the kingdom of God. He saw what was to be hoped for, but he already knew and experienced God's in-breaking reign in the present. He realized and proclaimed that it was already realizable now for those who respond in faith and follow God's will.

To what extent is your faith "the realization of what is hoped for"? How close do you come to doing as Jesus tells us to do in the Gospel: "Sell your belongings and give alms." Faith calls us to live from a depth of trust that enables us to do these things. When you resist, what holds you back, what ties you down? Those are the things that we must free ourselves from. What is at stake here is not just how we spend money; it's also about how we spend time, and for whom. Attitudes are part of our *belongings* too. When we are bound up with attitudes of the world like racism, sexism, consumerism and individualism, faith calls us to let them go, to open our hearts' truth, and like Abraham, to obey "by faith; to journey "by faith."

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ When might you have met and talked with someone who had no faith in God? How did you respond or connect with this person?
- ◆ When has the fact of your being a person of faith come up in a conversation with another? What did you share?
- ◆ What is the state of your faith in God these days?
- ◆ What evidence do you point to as a sign of the presence of God in your life, our world?
- ◆ What things have changed in your life because of your faith?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Play some short instrumental music as you sit and be. When the music is complete, listen in the silence for the movement of God's Spirit in your soul. Conclude your prayer time by praying the Lord's Prayer out loud.

- ◆ Act with trust in God; take a risk and reach out to someone from whom you may be alienated. Make some appropriate approach that the other might welcome as an expression of outreach from you.
- ◆ Take the Pledge to Care for Creation. By taking the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor, you are promising to be actively involved in the issue of climate change by praying, learning, assessing, acting and advocating for a lessening of the adverse effects of climate change on the earth and poor people. To take the pledge or learn more about it, go to the Catholic Climate Covenant website: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of quiet. After a minute of silence, the gospel for the week is re-read by a member of the community. Following the reading, the leader poses this question to the community: "What does Christ say to you/us in your hearing this gospel today?" The community pauses for a full five to seven minutes of prayerful attention to how Christ speaks to them in this gospel. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them. When this sharing is complete, some instrumental music is played. While the music plays, the earthenware piece and then the cross are passed around the group. When the music is complete, the leader prays as follows on behalf of all.)

Leader: Lord Jesus, you gave your life for us on a cross. We, like the earthen vessel, are made of the earth. But the world did not make us. It is you and the Spirit and the Father who have made us. We are formed in your image. Lead us to a life that is fully formed in the image of your life – a communion life that is the evidence of faith. In this week ahead, may we live as vessels that bring your life and pour it out for others.

All: Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)

