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# By faith

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez | Aug. 10, 2013 Spiritual Reflections

Today, the author of Hebrews sets the ambience for our worship, holding up Abraham, our father in faith, for our edification and emulation. In a mini-biography, the ancient writer reminds us of the salient moments of Abraham?s life, each one of which was made possible by faith. By faith Abraham obeyed, not knowing where he was to go; by faith he sojourned; by faith he received power; by faith he offered up Isaac. Abraham was able to be and to do all that God asked of him only because his entire life was driven and empowered by faith. As Søren Kierkegaard has put it, ?By faith, Abraham went out from the land of his fathers and became a sojourner in the land of promise. He left one thing behind and took one thing with him. He left his earthly understanding behind and took faith with him. Otherwise he could never have gone forth? (*Provocations*, Plough Pub., 1999).

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 18:6-9
Psalm 33
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19
Luke 12:32-48

In today?s first reading, the Wisdom author praises a faith similar to Abraham?s. Referring to the night of Passover, when the blood on their lintels and doorposts spared the Hebrews in Egypt, the sapiential author prepares the way for us to understand and appreciate the blood of Jesus. By his salvific death on the cross and through the shedding of his blood, sinners pass over from guilt to forgiveness, from death to life. This is a mystery that cannot be grasped by reason, for there is no rational explanation for such an act. Only faith can probe the mystery. The mystery of our salvation, grasped and appropriated by faith, must also be lived by faith.

As we look again today at Abraham, and as we remember the fervor of the early Christians, let us be renewed in our belief and newly fortified by our faith. Let us continue to be salt and light and leaven in a world so much in need of Christ. Faith will require that we be willing to sojourn in this world without the luxury of setting our own itinerary and without full knowledge of where God will lead. Faith requires that we believe even when it seems more practical not to. Faith also will ask that we be willing to surrender our Isaac to God. Just as Abraham fully relied on Isaac to keep his heritage and his name alive, each of us has an Isaac -- someone or something without which we think we cannot live. Even that, which is so precious to us -- even that must be surrendered to God if we are truly to live by faith.

Genuine faith is more than the Sunday obligation or a time set apart each day for prayer. Faith is seeing another in need and stopping to help rather than pass them by. Faith is speaking out against injustice and voting according to our conscience. Faith is letting our principles guide our lives rather than being swept along by

popular opinion. Faith is believing without seeing, praying without ceasing and trusting without proof that God is, that Jesus is and that the Spirit dwells within. Faith is the willingness to speak out when it is safer to remain silent.

In all of our efforts at believing, we are not alone or unequipped. Through grace and by the power of the Spirit, and with a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, we venture forward. Faith, as Kierkegaard has said, means that what I seek is not here, but I believe. Faith is that deep, strong, blessed restlessness that drives believers such that they cannot settle down at rest in this world. Those who have settled down cease to be believers, because a believer cannot sit still. A believer travels forward in faith -- as did Abraham, as did the Hebrews in Egypt, as did the first believers in Jesus and as do we, please God.

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