

19th Sunday of the Year C

**First Reading** Wisdom 18:6-9

That night had been foretold to our ancestors, so that, once they saw what kind of oaths they had put their trust in, they would joyfully take courage. This was the expectation of your people, the saving of the virtuous and the ruin of their enemies; for by the same act with which you took vengeance on our foes you made us glorious by calling us to you. The devout children of worthy men offered sacrifice in secret and this divine pact they struck with one accord: that the saints would share the same blessings and dangers alike; and forthwith they had begun to chant the hymns of the fathers.

**Second Reading** Hebrews 11:1-2.8-12

Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen. It was for faith that our ancestors were commended. It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. By faith he arrived, as a foreigner, in the Promised Land, and lived there as if in a strange country, with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. They lived there in tents while he looked forward to a city founded, designed and built by God. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.

**Gospel** Luke 12:35-40

Jesus said to his disciples: "See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. Happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.

I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at table and wait on them. It may be in the second watch he comes, or in the third, but happy those servants if he finds them ready. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

**Meditation**

Several generations of Christians lived with the conviction that Christ would come back in the middle of the great paschal night. That night symbolizes the long vigil which the Church keeps by the light of the scriptures. The early Church believed that he would not delay. But the course of history soon showed that the vigil would be long. Luke insists that we must wait for the parousia and that we do not know when it will come. The Master will come like a thief; he will surprise everyone. We run the risk that his unforeseeable return will find us unprepared.

The vigil is not an empty time during which fidelity can be relaxed. For us, Christians of the twenty-first century, the importance rather than the imminence of the Lord's return must continue to dominate our lives. In the trying obscurity of faith, even when the darkness of unbelief seems to spread over the earth and the "little flock" to diminish before our very eyes, we must keep vigil actively and without fear. The Master will return, put on an apron, seat us at table, and serve us.