

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, August 11, 2019

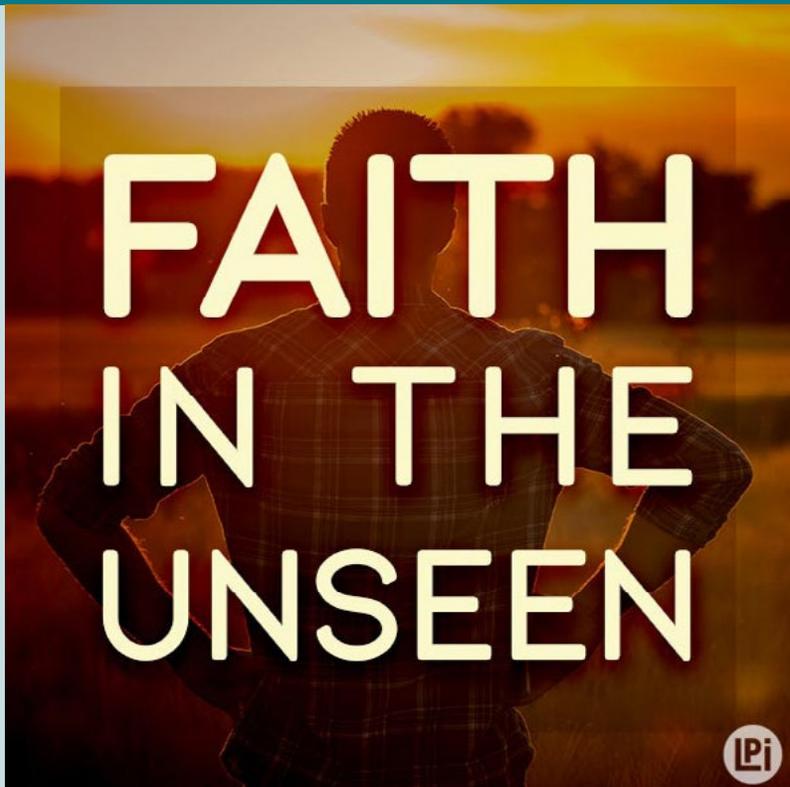
Jesus Brings the Kingdom with Him

Written by Br. John-Marmion Villa, BSC

Wisdom 18:6-9

Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

Luke 12:32-48



A few years ago, I went to see the movie “Star Wars” on its opening night. This was to be an event like no other. The organization I was working for bought all the tickets for that evening’s showing. I was there with about 200 others, and the moment that the iconic John Williams theme started with the characteristic story line scrolling upwards on the screen, the theater was electric! There were shouts and applauses from everyone. We watched with great delight seeing our favorite intergalactic heroes appear.

A few weeks ago, I had the chance to visit St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. To my great surprise, a wedding was about to begin. There were twice as many tourists as wedding guests. I found myself off to the side, with a great view of the main aisle. Other tourists were thinking the same thing I was: I gotta get my phone out and take a video of the bride! The wedding party had just arrived, and the organist began playing the wedding march. A few moments later, I was able to see the bride walking solemnly down the aisle, escorted by her father. They met the groom at the foot of the altar, and the father-of-the bride gave his daughter away to her soon-to-be husband. The two then walked up the steps into the sanctuary.

What do these two familiar occasions have in common? You might be thinking to yourself, “An

eager anticipation." If you were thinking that, you're not too far off. But there's one more step to take. An eager anticipation of what? *The arrival*.

Yes! The arrival ... of the movie starting ... of the bride meeting her groom. We've all been in situations like this, so it's not too far of a stretch to say that today's Gospel talks about the eager anticipation of the arrival of the kingdom. Throughout his Gospel (4:43, 6:20, 8:10, 10:9, to name a few), Luke talks about the kingdom of God as being present anytime Jesus is around. Jesus brings the kingdom with him! And not only that, today's Gospel says that we have all been given that kingdom.

That sounds a little strange to the modern ear, no doubt. When I think "kingdom," I think medieval castles and the gallantry of knights and noble ladies. But Jesus' kingdom isn't like that. His kingdom can only be seen by faith. Did you know that word is used 5 times in this week's second reading. "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). This kind of faith is what is needed to see the kingdom of God here and now ... today, right where we are. It is this kind of faith that evokes that eager anticipation of the bridal procession or the start of the long-awaited movie.

If anyone else is like me, I need to learn how to make space in my life so that I can be more attuned to spiritual realities. My life can be so bombarded with all sorts of noise from the outside as well as the inside. I'm learning to slow down my life ... even when I am at home, or more so, when I am alone with the Lord in the solitude of prayer. This takes energy, courage, and discipline.

PRAYER

Lord, I believe in you.
I believe you are good.
I believe that I am secure in you,
that I am hidden in you
and no real harm can come to me
with you as my rock and my salvation.
I believe that you see me and you love me,
that I am treasured in your sight.
Help my unbelief.
Help that head knowledge become heart knowledge,
so that my actions reflect those truths
and not the lies the enemy throws at me.

— *Prayer When Struggling with Doubt*

Our spiritual lives have taken a back seat to reason and emotion, neither of which are bad in themselves. But faith comes from a place other than the mind and heart, though definitely connected to them. When we allow ourselves to really live by faith as described in Hebrews, then we begin to see the kingdom living within me and all around me. Who doesn't want more of that ... especially in today's world?

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