19th Sunday OT (c)

August 10th, 2025

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

It surprised me, but I’ve read that 90% of Americans believe in God.

And most believe there is a life after death.

They believe God rewards or punishes people based on how they lived their life.

Faith or belief though is more than a conviction that God exists.

True Christian faith is a dynamic journey, a quest of trust, confidence, and commitment that involves taking risks.

We have just heard one of the most famous lines in the Bible.

It gives us God’s own definition of the most important Christian virtue, the very bedrock of our Christian life: **Faith**.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us what faith is.

He writes: *“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”*

These are two ways of saying the same thing.

“*The realization of what is hoped for”* means that when we have faith, we are filled with a certainty that God will fulfill his promises, even though they haven’t been fulfilled yet.

“*Evidence of things not seen”* means that when we have faith, we have a supernatural knowledge, we know with certainty that all things God has revealed are true.

No one here in this church saw with their physical eyes Jesus rise from the dead, but we know he is risen.

No one here in this church sees with their physical eyes the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist, but we know he is truly present underneath the appearances of bread and wine.

This is the essence of faith: accepting something as true-Not because our own senses assure us of it, but because the person who tells it is trustworthy.

The Church that teaches us that Christ rose from the dead, and that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, is trustworthy.

For over 2000 years it has weathered the storms and still teaches the same doctrine as when it started.

That Church continues to celebrate the same sacraments that makes saints for this needy world.

This is the faith of evidence of things not seen with our senses and is one of God’s greatest gifts to us.

Today, the Church is inviting us to appreciate it anew.

Many of today’s so-called intellectuals and cultural elites consider faith to be childish.

They mock faithful people.

Mature people, they say, don’t depend on faith; they should depend only on science and reason.

They want to make people like us, who still value faith, feel embarrassed about it.

We don’t want other people to look down on us so we might cover up our faith in certain social situations.

But we shouldn’t feel embarrassed.

Faith is a necessary part of any fully human life.

Those elitists who criticize us for having faith in God are making two big mistakes.

First, they forget that we have very good reasons that support our faith.

While it’s true we were not eyewitnesses to Christ’s resurrection, there were many eyewitnesses who saw the risen Christ.

Those eyewitnesses founded the Church, which has endured longer than any mere human organization.

It’s also true we were not eyewitnesses to the creation of the universe, but the order and beauty of the cosmos makes it quite reasonable to believe that there was indeed an intelligent creator.

The second mistake these critics make is forgetting that they too live most of their lives by faith.

They have faith in the engineer who designed the bridge they must drive over going to work, the doctors who prescribe the medicine that keeps them healthy or alive, and the schools that educate their children.

Human society is built on faith, on trusting others, whether God or other people.

Eliminating faith, which is impossible, wouldn’t make us more mature, it makes us less human.

In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus reminds us to be vigilant servants awaiting their master’s return.

It is not a question of “if” but when.

Jesus’ second coming could be at any moment, or the moment of our death.

Each one of us is called to live our lives prepared at any moment to meet Jesus face to face.

All too often people put off taking their faith and their personal relationship with Jesus seriously.

We live busy lives, we have jobs and careers, children to raise and so many other things we want to do and tend to lose our focus.

We can always be in a hurry and forget the most important thing in our lives.

I know about this because it happened to me.

But fortunately, God reached me after I had made myself miserable enough to listen and seek Him whom I so desperately needed in my life.

A snapshot of my life at one point would be seen to the world as someone who was living the dream.

I had a great paying job, a great wife and four wonderful children going to private schools, lived in a fine home in mid-town Tulsa, drove nice cars, went on expensive vacations and yet I knew something was missing.

I considered myself to be a devoted husband and father and participated in my Catholic faith regularly.

But looking back, I would describe my faith as very mechanical.

Deacon Tim Sullivan had invited me to live a Cursillo Weekend sometime in the mid 1990’s.

I wasn’t ready, and I thought he was a Jesus freak!

Many years later, in April 2002, I was ready to risk getting out of my box and lived my Cursillo #30.

Since then, by the grace of God, my life has been forever changed.

It was the Holy Spirit, working through the team at the Cursillo, that opened my heart again to live my Catholic Christianity.

When the weekend began, I felt I was unworthy of God’s love; how could God love me after all I had or hadn’t done.

I went to the sacrament of reconciliation for a good soul scrubbing.

Hearing the words of absolution, “I absolve you of your sins” I felt the embrace of God’s love as never before.

On my Cursillo weekend, I learned so much about my faith which had stagnated since high school.

Faith indeed is a journey.

I’ve told the story of my conversion experience many times, and each time I think about all the years of joy and peace that I had missed being away from the Lord.

I can never get those years back, but I take consolation knowing the owner of the vineyard paid the same wages earned by those who had worked all day to those who were hired late in the day.

I’m still growing in my faith with hope that I will be ready when the master returns.

When our faith is strong, we can weather difficult times, like losing someone we dearly love, our children straying from the faith, addictions, our own poor health, tough financial periods, pandemics and natural disasters.

This is life in a fallen world-full of hardships and suffering, uneven and uphill paths.

Sometimes difficulties come because God is asking us to follow him more closely, but we don’t want to step out of our comfort zone.

It is God who will lead us through all of them, making us better and holier.

When we allow God into our lives, exercise our faith and trust in Him who sees the whole picture, good things will happen.

How can we exercise our faith? By practicing.

Each day, when good things happen or when bad things happen, God is always providing us with opportunities to say in our hearts, “Lord, I believe in you; teach me to follow you.”

Let that be our prayer today, as we come forward to receive the Lord in Holy Communion or for a blessing.

He gave His life on the cross and rose from the dead to convince us that he is worthy of our faith.

Today, and every day of the week, let’s give Him the joy of finding real faith in our hearts, and knowing that His sacrifice was not made in vain.