

Homily. 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year C. 10/11 August 2019.

I've got no real idea what the 1st reading is about so don't ask me, and I won't be preaching on it either for the same reason. The gospel is all about being ready to greet Jesus when He comes, telling us that His coming is often at an unexpected time. Of course, there is His unforeseen coming at the end of our lives. That much we know already.

The coming of Christ means more for us than that though, because He comes to us and for us, time and time again, throughout our days and nights. The wonderful poem 'The Hound of Heaven' written by Francis Thompson in 1893 says that; as we keep fleeing from God 'down the nights and days, down the arches of the years and labyrinthine ways, those strong feet follow us ever after us with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace; And a voice beats, more insistent than the feet saying, All things betray thee, who betrayest me.' If you are not familiar with this poem look it up and read it. I promise you it'll be well worth your time.

Which brings us then to faith, the name we give to our daily journey with God throughout the course of our lives. As with life itself, faith is a gift. It's not something we achieve or get for ourselves all by our own efforts. Like life, faith, too, comes from God, nurtured by our parents, guardians, godparents and all of the other relationships and experiences we have. Just as being born makes us part of a particular family of some kind and part of the much wider human family, so faith gives birth to us into God's family, the family of families we call the Church across the world.

Our Church faith family transcends all languages, races, cultures and ways of living. Its faith that keeps us awake and alert for the coming into our lives of Christ. Its faith, which lets us see Jesus in the people, events and experiences of our daily round. Its faith nurtured in our Church family, which gives us the eyesight to recognise the Lord when He comes knocking at our door arriving for the wedding feast, and the readiness to open up our hearts and minds and let Him in.

The Hebrews reading tells us about the great faith and vision of the men and women of our history. They trusted God, keeping an eye out for God's presence and action in their lives and times. They chose to put their hope in the promises God made to them even when they wouldn't live long enough to see those promises brought to fulfilment. It's this sort of faith that enables us to store up a treasure in Heaven where, as Jesus says, it will not fail us, be stolen from us or ever rot away.

The reason it's possible for us to have this hope, this outlook on life, is because faith gives us a fresh set of glasses with which we view reality. We can now look at everything and everyone, especially bad people and negative things, through the lens of the resurrection. Every betrayal and failure, every little dying, and even death itself, is a chance for us to stop running away, turn around and open up the door to those insistent feet and that shadowy figure pursuing us with His pressing voice. When we do that we find it was always the Lord hounding after us, trying to reach us, teach us and embrace us in his loving arms. This is the great gift that faith is to us, a gift worthy of nurturing and sharing in every way that we can.