

AUGUST 11, 2019
Sunday of the 18th Week in OT
Lk. 12: 32-48

TO LAY DOWN ONE'S LIFE FOR JESUS CHRIST

There is a story of two young girls, just ordinary girls of their time. The year was 202, in Carthage, North Africa, which was part of the Roman Empire. The young noble woman was 22 years old, and her servant girl, about the same age, both were pregnant. They heard a missionary speak about Jesus Christ and the eternal kingdom, the Love of God, and the gift of spiritual life which was foreign to the materialistic Roman Empire. They decided to take instructions, join these people of Jesus Christ, these Christians. They experienced the closer they came to Christ, the greater their joy. They were given Christian names: the noble woman was called Perpetua which means Forever Faithful and her servant girl, Felicity which means the Happy One. Perpetua had her baby, a boy, and was nursing the child when someone accused her and Felicity of being Christians. If they did not deny Christ, they would be put to death. Perpetua's father pleaded with her. Perpetua responded that for her to deny Christ would be to deny her very self. "This is who I am, " she said, "I am a Christian." Felicity also was determined to give witness to the Lord. The games were coming up. A show was needed for between the contests. Just two days before their execution, Felicity gave birth to a healthy girl. Perpetua and Felicity and three others were condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts. When they were already in the arena, Perpetua called out to all Christians: "Stand fast in the faith and love one another. Do not let our sufferings be a stumbling block to you." Saints Perpetua and Felicity stood side by side and were killed by the sword. Catholic Online: Saints and Angels

What a beautiful manifestation of faith and a model for following the Lord.

In our second readings today, the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we are being reminded by the Letter to the Hebrews that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” This is the faith of Abraham which brought him serenity and joy. “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set us for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.” That faith, that trust lead him to eternal happiness in the hands of God. By his faith, we are impressed at how he obeyed when God asked him to leave the past behind and launch out into an unknown future.

In our Gospel, Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not be afraid...” it reminds us that whoever belongs to Jesus need not have to fear. If we make God our treasure, and commit ourselves to Christ as our guide everyday, we will see life as a journey leading to our true home, the eternal Kingdom of God, where God our loving Father is there to welcome us open arms with all His love and mercy. God will never take us for granted.

I said this in my homily last Wednesday: When I was small, (it seems that I’m taller now, I’m still small), my mother always took care of me when I was sick. She was so worried and anxious because I can’t eat and moved. A mother will always say: “If I can, I’m willing to take all my children’s suffering, I don’t want to see them in that condition.”

Love will never have boundaries, no limits. That’s the love of our parents, our father and mother, they will never take us for granted. When we’re young, our parents do everything to take care of us. They are our teachers, our nurse, our protector, our cook and our cleaner. They always put their need second so they can put our need first but then, when they get older, and they are the ones that need to be taken care of, we no longer have time for them. We ignore their calls, forget to visit, get upset when they need our help and get less and less patient every day. Sometimes, we get so busy while

we are growing up, then we forget, our parents are also growing old. Sometimes, our lives are put to the test, but they are always at our side willing to be of help not always financially but assurances of prayers and care and love. So be sure to spend time with your parents while you can because one day, when you look up from your busy life, they won't never be there anymore.

The Gospel suggests that God also makes demands of us. Often our faith was seriously put to the test, like that of Abraham and his wife Sarah, when it seemed that there will never be children in their lives. We don't know in advance, in the future, tomorrow, what will be the demands of God's love may make on us that will contradict with our own plans, decisions and wants. We cannot know when personal sickness, difficulties, problems, bereavement or some other misfortune will put us to the test. But my brothers and sisters, we trust that our life will be a victory if we set our hearts on being true, faithful and authentic to the will of God. If we have faith like of that of Abraham, at the end of our life, our pilgrimage, our journey, all of God's promises will be fulfilled. Trust our Lord, He will fulfill His promises: you will be with Him in paradise if you will be with Him even in trials and persecutions. Our Lord Jesus Christ will never abandon us. So, like Saints Perpetua and Felicity and all martyrs, let us be faithful to the Lord and be ready to lay down our lives for Jesus Christ.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus, you alone are my love, my treasure and the joy and happiness of my heart. May there be nothing in this world, materials things and worldly pleasure, that holds me back from giving you my all. You are my all, my life, my happiness and joy now and forever. Amen."