



Homily for  
THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
6/7 August, 2016

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**Deacon Dennis' homily follows....**

What do Antarctica, atoms, Julius Cesar have in common? Well, I'm guessing that none of us, or at least very few of us, have ever seen any of them, but we believe they exist. Why is that? Well, people have told us about them. Whether they are explorers, historians, or physicists, someone took the time to do research into something and tells us about these things, and we believe them. In fact, that's how we learn just about everything. Kids are very impressionable and a lot of what they learn is what their parents tell them. Trusting, or having faith, in what someone tells you is essential to learning about the world around us. There is so much out there that it's simply not possible for us to go out there, experience everything, and rediscover it for ourselves. None of us probably has the intellectual capacity to come up with a proof for the existence of atoms, to learn the languages to read ancient texts, and to explore and map the world, let alone the time to do it all. We have to focus on what we can do, and we rely upon and trust others for a lot of what we can't. If we didn't, it would be impossible to function in the world. Having faith, being able to trust, is essential to our lives as human beings.

Today's readings speak to us a lot about faith. The Letter to the Hebrews says that "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and *evidence of things not seen*". Evidence of things not seen. We live by faith every day believing and dealing with things we have not seen but have evidence for, and our faith in God is very similar. The Letter to the Hebrews gives us some of that evidence. Abraham moved into the land in the faith that God would give him as he said, and it came about. Abraham had a son in a very old age, which should not have been possible,

but he had faith in God who made it happen. These are just two small examples of the evidence of God's goodness and God working in our lives. The Bible is full of examples! The lives of the saints are full of witnesses and miracles attesting to God's power and love for his people. Just the continued existence of the Church over the centuries is a testament to God's continued love for us. Think about it, we have thousands of years of witnesses passing on their experience, their evidence for God and his love for us. The basis for our faith in God is very, very strong.

What about this aspect of Faith as "the realization of things hoped for"? The second reading also tells us that "All these [descendants of Abraham] died in faith. They did not receive what had been promised but saw it and greeted it from afar". Hope and faith are intimately united. We have seen the goodness of God at work in the world, many have testified to it, and we have experienced it, and so we have faith in God. Faith in his love. But we know that all that has been promised has not all been fulfilled yet. We have been promised the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Jesus, and we look forward to that in faith because we trust in God. That is where our hope comes in. Faith leads us to hope, the same hope that Abraham and the saints had. Living in faith and hope is exactly what Jesus is encouraging us to in the Gospel today as well. We don't know when these things will happen, but if we live lives of faith, trusting that God our Father will give us the kingdom, it will change our lives now. We will value that promise above all else, focusing on the "inexhaustible treasure in heaven" rather than the passing things of this world.

This faith is a gift. Ask yourself for a moment, why does a parent tell their child not to touch the stove when its hot? I think most of us will agree that its because they love their child and don't want to see them hurt. Yes, of course there is the part that if they don't mommy or daddy has to take care of a screaming hurt child and they don't want to do that, but more than that, they do it out of love. This is true of those who pass on the faith to us as well. They do it because they know it is good for us, because they love us. Over thousands of years, people have seen the good not only in what we hope for, but also the value of living in faith now. It changes our lives for the better, and so they have handed it on to us out of love. More have passed away who have handed on the faith than those living today. Handing on the faith was of no benefit to them personally. They did not gain power, wealth or prestige by it. They simply wanted those

who came after them to experience the goodness, happiness, peace, and fulfillment of living a life of faith, because they had experienced it.

Brothers and sisters, faith truly is a gift and one that we should take seriously. It is a gift from God, but also from our parents, relatives, teachers, priests, and all who have handed it on to us. Just like any gift, we should be grateful for it and not take it for granted. It is one of the greatest gifts we could receive, for it was given to us selflessly, for the sake of our well being and happiness. As we contemplate this gift and our gratitude for it, let us also give generously of what we have freely received and teach others the faith, so that they too may be ready when the master comes again, and live the joy, peace, and happiness of a life of faith now. To whom much has been given, much will be expected.