

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

What is the focus of our ultimate concern? What demands our complete surrender and promises our complete fulfillment? Today's readings challenge us to make that choice. They ask us to what extent we are willing to sacrifice to realize that ultimate concern.

In the first reading, writing from the first century BC, the author reminds that commitment to the age-old faith of Israel is not out of place in the cosmopolitan setting of that time. The concern for the patriarchal generation was for deliverance. This was done as described in Genesis. That concern should be an example for the author's audience.

In the second reading, the author directs his talks to Jewish Christians who are tempted to leave the faith. He advises that Christianity is based on God's promises to be realized in the future. He urges them to emulate the faith of Abraham and Sarah. God's promises included numerous descendants to a couple well past child-bearing age. And, that they would be full citizens in a land (Canaan) where he was but an alien.

In the Gospel, Jesus states, "Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be." Believers must be constantly prepared with belts fastened and lamps lit for the coming of the reign of God. The issue of Church leaders' conduct is addressed. They must resist the temptation to disparage and abuse those assigned to their care. Power can too easily replace justice as the leader's ultimate concern. The reading closes with the fact that much will be demanded from those who are given much.