

Homily for August 12, 2001
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

By Father Charles Bowes

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

It takes courage to believe and to proclaim that belief.

Today's second reading, Hebrews chapter 11, gives a classic definition of faith.

In the older Douay translations it was one of the questions put out for memory of the number 3 Baltimore Catechism, which some may remember: "Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see." God, of course, is the principle "thing" we do not see, and God is no thing, but the underlying principle of all things, all reality. Because that kind of language is too difficult or abstract, Jesus brought God closer, someone we could see and touch - in his body and our humanity. The "confident assurance" we have about these things - the great truths of religion and the heaven we hope for - has much evidence to support it but is ultimately a gift. It is a gift of meaning from God to us.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews gives examples of men and women of great faith, all Old Testament figures, and only a few out of "a cold cloud of witnesses," as he calls them in the next chapter. It is more difficult today to talk of faith, and those who practice it. Why? because we live in a secular and scientific age. It does not seem "scientific" to give ascent to "things we cannot see." Yet although there are many church-goers, (at least in this country), believers

are not in a majority. When religious questions like faith in God, eternal life, or Jesus and the Resurrection come up, people are polite, but really not interested; often they simply wait you out, or suspect you must be a Fundamentalist hoping to convert them. The thought that religion might be a fascinating subject just to discuss and even more so to live, doesn't occur to many.

Today, more than ever, it takes courage to believe and even more courage to proclaim what we believe.

The great British writer C. S. Lewis once wrote: "I believe in Christianity as I believe in the sun - not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

Let us pray, awaken us O Lord - and keep us so - ready for your coming. Keep us grateful for the treasure you have given: Christ your son who is servant at your table and master and Lord forever and ever.

Amen