

19 Sunday C

August 7, 2022

St. Patrick's

Theme: By faith we can take the next steps in our pilgrimage, believing “that the one who had made the promise is trustworthy.”

It's the only definition of “faith” in the whole Bible. And we heard it this Sunday:
“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

“A fifteen-year-old boy and his father were driving past a tiny airport in Ohio. A low-flying plane suddenly spun out of control and nose-dived into the runway. The boy yelled, ‘Dad! Dad! Stop the car!’”

“Moments later the boy was pulling the pilot out of the plane. He was a twenty-year-old student flier who was practicing takeoffs and landings. The young man died in the boy's arms.

“When the boy arrived home, he threw his arms around his mother and cried, ‘Mom, he was my friend! He was only twenty!’”

“That night the boy was too shocked to eat supper. He went to his room, closed the door, and lay on his bed. He had been working part-time in a drugstore. Every cent he made he spent on flying lessons. His goal was to get his pilot's license when he turned sixteen.

“The boy's parents wondered what effect the tragedy would have on their son. Would he stop taking lessons, or would he continue? They agreed that the decision must be his.

“Two days later the boy's mother brought some freshly baked cookies to her son's room. On his dresser she saw an open notebook. It was the one he had kept from childhood. Across the top of the page was written, in big letters, ‘The Character of Jesus.’ Beneath was listed a series of qualities:

“Jesus was sinless;
He was humble;
He championed the poor;

He was unselfish;
He was close to God...’

“The mother saw that in son’s hour of decision he was turning to Jesus for guidance. Later she turned to her son and said, ‘What have you decided about flying?’ The boy replied, ‘Mom, I hope you and Dad will understand, but with God’s help, I must continue to fly.’

“That boy was Neil Armstrong. And on July 20, 1969, he became the first human being to walk on the moon.” (1)

“With God’s help”: Sometimes it’s not about going to the moon. It might be simply living the day; or making a decision, or taking the next step.

We hear this Sunday from chapter 11 of the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews. It teaches about living *by faith* in God, and it lists heroes and heroines who took risks. Eighteen times this chapter uses the refrain “**by faith,**” when it gives the stories of those who “**thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy.**”

It starts off with Abraham, at 75 comfortable in his retirement, living on Social Security and a healthy pension. He and his wife Sarah were stretched to let go of everything that made their life secure: their own “place,” their predictable future. They were stretched to take a huge risk, “**not knowing where he was going.**”

Or it might be a teenager who made a choice with Jesus as his model, and he became the first to walk on the moon. We need these models of faith. I tend to suffer from amnesia, forgetting how God has provided richly in the past if only I trust fully—*if only I trust fully*. Each new risk, I may forget that the One who leads us is, indeed, trustworthy.

By faith, however, we take the next step—perhaps even boldly. “**Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom**” (Luke 12:32).

(1) Mark Link, S.J., Challenge 2000: A Daily Meditation Program Based on *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Allen, Texas: Tabor Publishers, 1993), pp. 238-39.

General Intercessions

August 7, 2022

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

For us, the church: that God sustain us by faith in our journey together to our heavenly homeland; we pray to you, O Lord—

For students, as they begin this new school year: that the Spirit of God may grant them the gifts of wisdom and understanding; we pray to you, O Lord—

For teachers: that they may share their knowledge with gentleness, patience, and concern for their students; we pray to you, O Lord—

For parents, the first teachers of their children: that their faith and love may be an example to us always; we pray to you, O Lord—

For the people of eastern Kentucky, suffering terribly from the recent flooding; as well as those suffering from famine, drought, or wildfires; we pray to you, O Lord—

In remembrance of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 77 years ago, make us true peacemakers in a violent world; we pray to you, O Lord—

For the eternal peace of all who have died, especially Dwanyel Robinson, daughter of Earl Randle; we pray to you, O Lord—

