

# Homily for the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 10-11, 2019

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

Preacher: Deni Mack

When have you been led to a place, job, person or event that you now realize must have been God's will for you? We have been told Abraham and Sarah obeyed God's calling and went where God called them. We can imagine they, like Abel, Enoch and Noah before them must have been extraordinary leaders to move that crowd of people, animals, tents, carpets, and cooking supplies. Nomadic people do move lock, stock and barrel when the wind is right, the promises compelling and the water scarce.

Their stories passed down through generations of trusting in God, taking leaps of faith into unknown territory nurtured faith in God's promise of land, of many descendants and of blessings on all families to come. Practical realities may have prompted their move. In looking back at all the reasons they left their homeland, they came to understand God had called them.

We, too, can tell our children and grandchildren stories that seemed to be motivated by practical realities when on deeper reflection come to be told of faith. There were compelling reasons our ancestors moved and why we came to where we are. Octogenarian Bridget told me of leaving her parents small farm in Ireland 65 years ago because she wanted to earn money to send it to her parents and three sisters who were "desperate."

Jack told of moving here from Brooklyn, New York 60 years ago because "there was violence all around me. I had to get out of there." I spoke of Irish ancestors escaping the potato famine and my paternal grandfather's Jewish parents running for their lives from the pogroms in Russia.

I asked Bridget and Jack if God led them out of Ireland and Brooklyn. Bridget said, "Surely God did you know; I could send money to the family and helped them quite a bit." Jack said, "You bet God did or I'd a been dead like my cousin." They trusted that since their decisions made

sense to them, God would approve because they were accepting responsibility for their family's safety and well-being.

In the case of my Irish ancestors, no one talked about the famine but my maternal grandfather sponsored many Irish migrating here and he delayed his marriage and his own studies to put his sisters through school.

My Russian Jewish ancestors found work in Appleton, Wisconsin. That ancestry was hidden from my brother and me. Our parents changed their name from Weinfeld to Winfield just about 10 years before the United States turned away the ship, *St. Louis*, from our shores. The *St. Louis* was full of Jews escaping the horrors of World War II. They were forced to return to their homeland where most of them died in concentration camps. Our borders were shut to them as people hyped lies that Jews were "commies" and "criminals."

Before the outbreak of war a Jewish American woman who'd been studying in Cologne, Germany, was appalled by how her German fiancé reacted to Kristallnacht. She broke off the engagement and came home to complete her doctoral studies and landed a job in Secretary of the Interior Harold Icke's office. She convinced him to work with her to encourage the administration to open our borders to Jews. Eventually, those Jews she was permitted to bring here were housed in old camps in Oswego, New York. Of the initial group of 800 Jewish refugees, one invented the CT scan. I shudder to think that refugee's life-saving invention might have died with him in the holocaust.

Today's psalm has us singing, "See, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, to deliver them from death and preserve them from famine." Bridget's, Jack's and my families all resonate with those who first sang those words. They know God delivered them from death and famine. We are grateful as we tell stories of our family's journeys for survival. And those of migrants all over the world streaming out of places of famine and violence.

Today's Gospel asks us to not simply sound grateful but to be vigilant for God's arrival. We are to be prudent and faithful servants preparing for Jesus who will come at anytime and does, we are told in people who are hungry, thirsty, in need of clothing, are in prison, are ill and as we welcome

strangers (Matthew 25:31-46). We are to “distribute food;” “more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”