

Nineteenth Sunday Ordinary Time
August 10, 2025
Year of the Holy Spirit

“If things are not seen, how can you be convinced that they exist? Where do the things come from, if not from the one whom you cannot see? The reason faith is greatly rewarded is that it does not see and yet believes. Faith does not falter, because it is supported by hope; if you take away hope, faith falters. If, from faith and hope, you withdraw love, what is the point of believing; what is the point of hoping, if you do not love? Indeed, you cannot even hope for anything you do not love.” (Saint Augustine)

We have listened to the words of Jesus, as recorded by Saint Luke, spoken to His disciples: *“For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”* (Luke 12:34) This statement concerning a “treasure” is a welcome addition to our New Testament Letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-12) In the Letter to the Hebrews, we focused upon the theological virtue of faith, bolstered by the theological virtue of hope, which motivates the Christian toward the theological virtue of love and that which one loves is one’s treasure. Yet, Saint Augustine asked a question which stills haunts man today: “How, after all, when you are walking somewhere, will you even move your feet, if you have no hope of ever getting there?” In essence, how are we to be moved to love something we have no hope of ever realizing the object of our love? It is precisely because Heaven is not seen that faith, hope and love are necessary.

The author of The Letter to the Hebrews reminds his listeners Abraham *“went out, not knowing where he was to go.”* (Hebrews 11:8) He had faith that God would lead him to a “promised land” in a foreign country. This land would serve as an inheritance for his descendants. However, upon arriving in the “promised land,” Abraham would find the land occupied by other tribes of men. Sacred Scripture records how Abraham, while in the promised land, would never settle down, plant crops or build a home. Instead, Abraham and his family lived the lives of aliens. They resided in tents and owned herds. Without seeing the fulfillment of His Divine Promise, they had faith in what God had spoken. Thus, they endured their hardships joyfully awaiting the day in which God’s word would be fulfilled. This fulfillment, this “promised land” became the treasure of their hearts.

When the author of the Letter to the Hebrews wrote concerning Abraham and other Old Testament “heroes” of faith, a particular issue was needing to be addressed. Hebrews, living in a society influenced by Greek culture and philosophy, had slowly begun to doubt the importance of faith. Many considered faith as “not necessary” when compared to that which is known through the senses or intellect. I know a thing conveys greater certainty than I believe a thing to be so. However, the author wants to remind all Hebrews that faith was and still remains active. This is important for his listeners and for us as well.

Abraham moved because of his faith in God. There is motion; there is movement. In this movement, there is also a purpose. I have faith, which causes me to move, thus offering a purpose for my move. We live as we do because of our faith in God. Therefore, we make decisions to move toward the things of God and away from things which lead away from God. This provides purpose and meaning to the way we live. Although, in this life, we may never receive a “Divine Visitor” who provides an answer to all of our questions, but would that matter? Honestly, if God, an angel or saint would descend from Heaven and present themselves to you in your home, would that change the way you live? For the Christian, the answer should be “No.” Faith in the Word of God, revealed through Sacred Scripture and the Church, is all the Christian needs. However, if we, after a spiritual examination, find we need a “certainty” which is currently lacking in our lives, then we must ask ourselves if we truly have faith in the Word of God?