93! No, that’s not the Magic Number for the Mets or the Yankees until the end of the season. It’s the number of days until this year’s General Election on November 8th. Over the years, I’ve noticed that for many of these politicians who were running for various offices such as the city council, state senate or assembly, borough president or even the city mayor, in order to earn the voters’ votes, they would associate themselves as coming from the hard-working, middle class background, who understand the real people’s struggles. Many also claim themselves as either immigrant or as the son or daughter of immigrants who left their home country in order to pursue their “American Dream” however many years ago. I’m sure we hear that all the time among the politicians. Even Donald Trump jumped into the bandwagon by claiming his pride that his current wife was an immigrant from Slovenia, although that doesn’t mean much when it comes to his policy on immigrants into this country. But that’s not what I would like to be discussing here today.

Over the years, having met many immigrant families especially those who are from Asia, I can certainly relate to what they must have been going through, similar to my own personal experience over 34 years ago. Many of these immigrant families left almost everything back in their “homeland” in order to pursue their “American” dream for their children. Despite working long hours in places like restaurants and garment factory sweat shops, just to earn enough to pay the rent and to put food on the table, deep in these parents’ hearts, their homeland was still half-way around the world. That’s the price of the sacrifice that every immigrant must pay.

Come to think of it, ALL of us here in this room are also either immigrants or sons and daughters of immigrants, unless you’re a native American. From a geo-political point of view, this very land that we are living on is NOT really ours, therefore none of us can really claim it as our earthly homeland. We are all immigrants at some point and are part of this pursuit of the illusive “American Dream”. We’ve left the security and the comfort of our homeland in search for a better future. Some came voluntarily and some were forced abroad a slave-ship. This was a huge commitment and sacrifice for us to make, basically having to start everything all over again.

Our text this week, taken from the letter written to the Hebrews, gave us a glimpse of a story of immigrants who left their homeland by faith and ventured out into a land that was promised by God. From Adam to Noah, Abraham to Moses…. Many like Moses, had run their race but unfortunately did not come to see the Promised Land…but that didn’t mean that they were failures or not as faithful. They had paved the way and set their legacy for their descendants to follow. Their time was not God’s time.

The letter to the Hebrews was written during a time when many early Christians (who were also Jews) were in deep fear of being persecuted because of their faith. Many of these Messianic Jews still practiced many the “Jewish” customs and observed the Mosaic Law, but they also believe the Jesus was the Messiah as God had promised to them. So these Messianic Jews found themselves kind of caught in between, of not fitting into both categories.

They were like children of immigrants who have left their homeland seeking to fulfill their life-long dreams for a better future. On one foot they were part of the new culture and new environment, while on the other, they were part of the old roots of where they came from. They were the 1.5 generation. They got the best, and the worst of both worlds.

**To many of the Jews, especially those who were born in exile or under slavery, their homeland was not so much of where they came from but rather where God has promised them to be and where God ultimately would lead them.**

Chapter 11 of Hebrews has often been referred to as a chronicle of of Faith, highlighting generations of the “faith-filled” parents. In the heart of this Hall of Faith, was the Father of Faith – Abraham, who like any immigrants, packed up everything that he owned and left his homeland, and went to where God had called him to be.

Abraham had all the securities and comforts that he would enjoy in his homeland. He was probably one of the wealthiest man on earth at the time. Abraham was blessed abundantly because of his faith and allegiance in the LORD. **The treasures that he earned in this earthly homeland were irrelevant compared to the treasures that he would receive in the heavenly homeland.** As the LORD told Abraham, “*I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Abraham went by faith in order to pursue not only his own dream but God’s dream on God’s people.** As a result of Abraham’s faith, his descendants were filled *“as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Despite his wealth and the homeland security that he was blessed with, Abraham did not live in a mansion on the mountaintop. But instead he lived in tents as nomads, always ready to move on the moment’s notice to wherever God directed him. They were instructed NOT to be settled down in a particular place, NOT to get too comfortable and feeling too complacent with where they are and what they have. Abraham had kept his eyes fixed on the heavenly things and not on the earthly things here below, just as we talked about last week.

Perhaps this was a metaphor for our own journey of faith as well….that we ought to be being transient and adaptable to our surroundings, whenever and wherever we may be called upon, under the vigilance and the leading of the Holy Spirit. God will call us whenever and wherever God sees fit. And we just need to be ready and faithful to God’s calling in us.

In the same way, **our faith also requires us to make the ultimate sacrifice of laying down our lives before Christ.** No longer do we live for ourselves, but we live for Christ. Through our faith in Christ, we are no longer citizens of this earthly homeland, but when we are baptized into Christ, our ultimate citizenship and our spiritual belonging rests in heaven.***[[3]](#footnote-3)***  ***It is in Christ, through Christ and with Christ where we shall find our ultimate homeland “security”.*** As our Gospel lesson reminded us that **we must always be prepared and ready for the Son of Man who will come at the unexpected hour.”[[4]](#footnote-4)**

***Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.[[5]](#footnote-5)*** **True faith is not faith that we follow blindly, but rather it is filled with Expectation and Hope**. Unfortunately, the “American Dream” that we pursue often clashes with our Christian understanding of faith and divine providence. The “American” dream is about striving toward the goals through our personal achievement and success. We believe in self-determination, counting on our own abilities rather than placing our trust in someone else’s hands or even God’s.

On the other hand, our **Christian’s understanding of dreams, hope and security does not rest upon our personal achievements but rather upon God’s grace and our faith in Jesus Christ. We must take a few steps back in order to place our faith forward.** That’s the major difference between the **“American Dream”** and our **Christian Hope for our future**.

**Faith can only be fully understood in light of the larger story of God’s promise. Faith helps us to** **see things from God’s perspective and in God’s timing, instead of ours**. As one theologian puts it, “*it allows people to see beyond what is right in front of them, their daily problems, to see what God is doing in their midst, to see what God has done throughout the ages, and to see the future joy God has in store for us.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

**This is all part of our calling as Christ’s ambassadors, and as God’s agents of hope, peace and reconciliation. Each day, as we place our trust in Christ, we look forward to seeing God’s story unfolded and becoming OUR story and OUR calling. May we never feel secured with our earthly homeland, but rather through our faith in Jesus Christ, God has secured us a place of our eternal homeland.**

May all thanks and glory be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Genesis 12:2-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Hebrews 11:12* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Phillippians 3:20* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Luke 12:40* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Hebrews 11:1* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Gary, David E., Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 3, P.354* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)