

There is power in Persistent Prayer

Lectio Divina for the twenty ninth Sunday in ordinary time C (October 16, 2022)

Opening prayer: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . Amen. Lord, teach us to love prayer. May you shower your blessings upon us to manifest our prayers before you, in public and in private, at church and at home. May we come before you with all our burdens and desires. We seldom want to pray or pray with much distractions. We confess our ignorance, for we do not know how to pray. As Jesus taught his disciples to pray, teach us to pray in our personal and family life in order to bear abundant fruits in our spiritual life. We ask that you remind us to come alongside you as we surrender every detail to fulfill your greater purpose. Align our hearts with yours, our ideas with yours, and our will with yours. For we know that your ways are higher than ours and your plans are greater than ours, and nothing is impossible with you. Lead us every step of the way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

First Reading: A reading from the book of Exodus 17:8-13

In those days, Amalek came and waged war against Israel. Moses, therefore, said to Joshua, "Pick out certain men, and tomorrow go out and engage Amalek in battle. I will be standing on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses told him: he engaged Amalek in battle after Moses had climbed to the top of the hill with Aaron and Hur. As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight. Moses' hands, however, grew tired; so they put a rock in place for him to sit on. Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, so that his hands remained steady till sunset. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (*The word of the Lord/Thanks be to God*).

Commentary: Moses sends Joshua with limited resources to fight against the mighty Amalekites. After sending Joshua, Moses is standing on the top of the mountain and fervently praying for the victory of the Israelites with outstretched arms. We note that "As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight." The message is that when we pray with outstretched arms, we will surely win the battle against temptations whatever it may and however strong they look like.

Responsorial Psalm 121

Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

I lift up my eyes toward the mountains; whence shall help come to me?
My help is from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

R. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

May he not suffer your foot to slip; may he slumber not who guards you:
indeed he neither slumbers nor sleeps, the guardian of Israel.

R. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade;
he is beside you at your right hand. The sun shall not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

R. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

The LORD will guard you from all evil;
he will guard your life. The LORD will guard your coming and your going,
both now and forever.

R. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

**Second Reading: A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to Timothy
3:14-4:2**

Beloved: Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, and that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. (***The word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God.***)

Commentary: Paul recommends Timothy and all of us to perseverance in prayer, in studying the Scriptures, in the practice of the Faith, and in preaching the word of God. At the time Paul was writing, pressure groups were trying to force Timothy to water down the doctrines of Faith. Therefore, Paul advises Timothy to “preach the word, stay with the task, whether convenient or inconvenient, correcting, reproving, appealing, constantly teaching and never losing patience.” That is, Timothy is to persevere in his ministry of shepherding his people, in spite of obstacles.

Gospel Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 18:1-8

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (***The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ***)

Reflection: By introducing the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow in today's Gospel, Jesus emphasizes the "necessity of praying always and not losing heart." Jesus presents the widow in today's Gospel as a model of trust, tenacity, and determination in our prayer life. Although the scriptures speak of protection for widows, orphans and aliens (Deut 10:18-19, 24:17-21, Ex 22:22-24), they were still exploited and oppressed by the Jewish society. The widow in Jesus' parable was the symbol of the poor and defenseless while the judge was obviously unjust, rich and influential. But the widow had one powerful weapon— "persistence" which gave the judge no peace. Her persistence was seen by everyone . Because of her tireless persistence, the unjust judge yielded and rendered justice.

Here Jesus is not comparing God with the unjust and insensitive judge but contrasting God with him. We should not be discouraged when our prayers remain unanswered for long time. We must wait for His Time. He has his own time for granting our prayers. But our task is to nag Him constantly and consistently because He is intimately present in all our turmoil and terror of life. He knows what all we go through namely our pains and distresses. He will see to that and render us justice in due time.

Let us not expect to get whatever we pray for. We know from our experience how a loving father deals with his child. When the child nags the father for something the father has his right to refuse because what the child is asking would hurt him rather than help him. Will any father gift a pistol and a knife for his child's birthday? No. God is like that. He knows what to give, when to give and how to give it. Time is His and whatever he gives is His and therefore He knows what is good for us in the long run. That is why Jesus said that we must never be discouraged in prayer. Instead we have to leave the answer to God's decision saying, as he did in Gethsemane, "Thy will be done."

Prayer is important for us because prayer opens communication with God. It strengthens our faith and trust in God. It makes us come closer to God. It is an act of obedience. It allows us to intercede on behalf of another person. It brings us comfort and peace during confusion and difficulties. It gives us the opportunity to turn our concerns over to God. Prayer reminds us that we don't need to worry because God our Father is in control of our life.

Final Prayer: Father, Thank You for the many blessings You provide. Thank You for the ability to lift others up in prayer. Please forgive us for times we neglect to go to You in prayer. We are grateful for the love and forgiveness You give. Thank You for hearing the prayers of Your people. Help us to remember to love each other. Please allow us to show Your love to others through our words and actions. In the name of Jesus, Amen.
(Hail Mary...Glory..Blessing)