

20th October 2019 (29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Exodus 17:8-13; Psalm 120(121); 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2; Luke 18:1-8.

'... pray continually....'

Addressing his followers, Jesus teaches them even with a twinkle in the eye a bit of humour! Luke tells us that Jesus used another parable to teach his disciples about the need to pray constantly, without ever giving up, even when things do not seem to be going their way.

The unjust judge in the story is a counter image of our just God the Father. The unjust judge neither respects the instructions of scripture nor respects his sisters and brothers. The Old Testament constantly insists on the need to respect the widow and the orphan, who have no one to defend them. In an environment where the woman has no authority without a man's support, the widow becomes the weakest link in society. She has no her husband to protect her, probably no adult sons to take on the role of their father, and no income. She is therefore totally dependent on society's institutions for her well-being. When these institutions fail her, as in the case of the unjust judge, she has no further recourse.

In a humorous twist, Jesus tells his listeners that the unjust judged is finally moved to act because he is afraid the widow was going to resort to violence and give him a black eye! The original Greek text uses expressions taken from the boxing ring! One wonders if Jesus is here referring to a known incident where a widow did hit someone when she did not get what she wanted!

Jesus makes the point that, if persistence was enough to finally move an unjust judge into action, how much more will prayer move a just God to come to the support of those who have faith in him! While we can doubt our sinful and unjust human institutions that can often fail us, we can certainly never doubt the justice, love and mercy of God.

Jesus insists on the need to pray constantly, day and night! In this context the term prayer does not refer to sitting or kneeling in adoration or reciting prayers. There is certainly time in our life when we participate in formal prayers, like Mass, and times for private prayers, both said and silent, yet that is not the only type of pray. Prayer is a loving relationship with God. Where there is true, sincere and deep love, relationship is not based on verbal or non-verbal communication, but on a deep commitment of love and respect towards each other, expressed in a wide variety of ways.

This is the relationship we are expected to have with God. God is always with us, like the air we breathe. There is no moment in our life when we are not in God's love and protection. In a similar way I need to place myself totally and completely in God's hands. I need to fully trust in God. Just as I never doubt that there is going to be enough air for me to breathe, so also, I cannot doubt for a single moment God's total love and support. Perhaps we can go back to the prayer: 'your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven!' This is the fullness of prayer: to pray that God's will takes over my whole life. St Paul tells us that whatever we do, awake or asleep, night or day, we do everything for the glory of God. (Cf 1Corinthians 10:31; 2 Thessalonians 5:10.)

Knowing all this, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? Am I truly persuaded that God's love envelopes me so completely, that I can fully and totally trust myself to him at all times? This is a question we need to ask continuously: do I really trust in God? Or do I rather only turn to him when things go wrong and I need him to fix things up for me? Do I really wish that God's will becomes my will and that I put always and everywhere God first in my life?

God knows this is difficult for us sinful and imperfect human beings. We are therefore constantly invited to use his word as a light on the way, the Eucharist as our food for the journey, and the sacrament of Reconciliation as our way of starting again.

Let us continue to live totally in God.

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