

Scripture Study

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

Exodus 17:8-13

(Ps 121:1-8)

2 Timothy 3:14—4:2

Luke 18:1-8

Overview of the Gospel:

- In this Sunday's Gospel reading we hear the first of two parables on prayer (we will hear the second next week).
- This week's parable features a widow who is seeking a judgment before a corrupt judge against her adversary. Widows in patriarchal societies were often defenseless in legal and other matters. The New Testament has much to say to the Church about caring for widows and others that had no rights and were at the mercy of society (Luke 4:25-26; 7:12; 20:47; 21:3; Acts 6:1; James 1:26-27).
- This woman has faith that justice will be done and is therefore persistent. Faith and resolve in prayer go hand in hand (Sirach 35:12-17; Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- Jesus also makes a veiled reference to his Second Coming (verse 8) following up on the previous passage (see Luke 17). Will Jesus' disciples remain faithful to him during this long wait? (This is a theme which we will soon look at in depth during the upcoming liturgical season of Advent)

Questions:

- What was the occasion of the prolonged prayer of Moses in the First Reading? How do we face similar crises in our lives but in other forms?
- In the Second Reading, St. Paul orders Timothy to hold fast to the truth as he has received it. According to 2 Timothy 4:2, "whether it is convenient or inconvenient," how are we to "proclaim the word"?
- What method did the woman in Jesus' story use as she approached the judge?
- How is God like and unlike the judge?
- What in the passage suggests that the woman was sure of the justice of her case?
- For whose sake do you think Jesus spoke this passage? How does Jesus apply the moral of the story to his audience (verses 6-8)?
- How does the widow's perseverance in pressing her case compare with your own perseverance in prayer? When it comes to prayer, are you more likely to give up or to hang tough? Why?
- When we grow weary in persevering in prayer, what are some things we can do to gain strength to carry on (Hint: see Reading 1, Exodus 17:8-13).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2613, 2098, 675

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

In order to pray, let us believe; and for our faith not to weaken, let us pray. Faith causes prayer to grow, and when prayer grows our faith is strengthened. --St. Augustine

"Keep praying and do not lose heart"

Scripture:

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.

2 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.



Luke 18:1-8:

And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.' For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Meditation: What can a shameless and unjust judge pitted against a crusty and pestering woman teach us about justice and vindication in the kingdom of God? Jesus tells a story that is all too true — a defenseless widow is taken advantaged of and refused her rights. Through sheer persistence she wears down an unscrupulous

judge until he gives her justice. Persistence pays off, and that's especially true for those who trust in God. Jesus illustrates how God as our Judge is much quicker to bring us his justice, blessing, and help when we need it. But we can easily lose heart and forget to ask our Heavenly Father for his grace and help. Jesus told this parable to give fresh hope and confidence to his disciples. In this present life we can expect trials and adversity, but we are not without hope in God. The Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices perpetrated by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death (Song of Songs 8:6). The just can look forward with hope to that day when they will receive their reward.

Jesus ends his parable with a probing question for us. Will you and I have faith — the faith that perseveres to the end — of time when Jesus returns in glory to judge the living and the dead? Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to us. If we want to live, grow, and persevere in the faith until the end, then we must nourish it with the word of God and ask the Lord to increase it (Luke 17:5). When trials and setbacks disappoint you, where do you place your hope? Do you pray with expectant faith and confidence in God's merciful care and providence for you?

"Lord, give me faith to believe your promises and give me perseverance and hope to withstand trials and adversities. Help me to trust in your unfailing love and to find joy and contentment in you alone."

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