

Homily for Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 15th/16th, 2022

By Deacon Richard Hay

“Perseverance, Persistence, and Prayer”

In the last couple of weeks, scripture readings from the daily Mass and now in today's readings, have been focusing on prayer.

One of the readings tells us about when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray he taught them what we know as the Lord's Prayer. In the very next day's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the Persistent Friend – this is the one where a man goes to his neighbor's house at midnight to ask for some bread to give to a friend that has just arrived at his home following a long journey. Initially, the neighbor refuses but ultimately provides the bread after his friend's persistence.

Prayer is integral to so many aspects of our faith – to use a cliché – it is some of the glue that holds our faith together. In every liturgy and devotional act the Church participates in – prayer is a key part.

Prayer is such an important part of our faith, that Jesus not only taught us to pray but also set the example of how to pray at times by

finding solitude – a quiet place – so that we can spend contemplative time with God to hear the whisper of his voice.

Taking a closer look at our readings today we see that in Exodus, the story of the battle between Amalek and Joshua, that as long as Moses held the staff of God over the battlefield, the Israelites were winning. However, overtime, as his arms grew tired and he tried to rest, Amalek would then gain the upper hand. Eventually, Aaron and Hur devised a way to help Moses by providing him with a rock to sit on and then helping to support his hands holding the staff of God over the battle. Ultimately, the Israelites won. Moses hands with the staff of God in them, being extended were like prayer, being offered persistently but as he tired and stopped praying – the situation in front of him changed. When other members of the community came to his assistance, participating in that prayer by supporting Moses, it proved successful because of the power of joining together in prayer.

Don't we all often ask others to pray for us or for a special intention? That is a good example of joining together in prayer.

In our responsorial psalm, we hear about persistence because the Lord is always there to hear us in prayer, to watch over us as we sleep,

protect us from all evil, guard our lives and our coming and going. One thing that is distinctly different between our persistence and God's – He never grows tired of always being there for us.

In our second reading, St. Paul writes to Timothy saying that we should be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient. There are going to be times that being persistent in prayer and our faith will be easy and other times it will be hard – it is how we approach our prayer and faith in those circumstances that help us build up our persistence in both. In other words, it is easy to be persistent in prayer when things are going sideways in life because we are troubled and we turn to God – as we should. However, many of us, and I include myself in this group, can get less persistent in prayer when things are going pretty good. We tend to let things ride in those times of less stress, worry, and concern.

Can we be persistent in prayer when it is convenient and easy plus when life is throwing multiple curve balls at us? By definition, persistent means that we should be, however, it is admittedly easier said than done.

We now arrive at the parable in today's gospel – that of the Persistent Widow. This is another example of how persistence in prayer can help us. In this case, the widow has obviously tried to get a proper

judgement for her situation multiple times but as we hear, the judge has no fear of God or of man and refuses to grant her a ruling. However, her persistence results in the judge eventually deciding to give her the ruling she seeks out but he does it out of fear that the widow would strike him.

Now just a note here, God doesn't answer our prayers out of fear but according to His will and what he knows we need. More about that in a minute.

Whether they are a request for a particular need or for thanksgiving for prayers that have been answered – yes prayers of thanksgiving are something God loves to here from us as well – we should try to always offer these prayers with persistence.

Now let me go back to how God answers our prayers – because this is important for all of us to understand.

In the past week, I came across a quote from Fr. Donal, our retired pastor, that was part the October Faith Moment for Habitat for Humanity here in Clay County.

In it he reminds us that what we perceive as unanswered prayers are not due to a weak faith on our part, or position in life, or any other

expectation or qualification. Those prayers are in fact answered but in accordance with God's will.

God as our Father knows what is best for us and of course His knowledge is infinite, His will for us is always good. He will never give us anything that is bad for us. So, when we pray for a miracle healing and that prayer seems unanswered to us, we may need to look and see what blessings might be surrounding that situation and try and discern God's will in those circumstances. Sometimes, those blessings might be very clear but at others times, it might take some time for them to be revealed to us.

Our faith requires a belief and trust in God's will for us – that he would never give us a rock when we ask for bread or a snake when we ask for a fish.

And when all else fails in our human understanding of God's will for us – it just might be time to be persistent and take that lack of understanding into prayer too.