

## **29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary time C/2007**

We live in an age of instant coffee, fast foods and quick answers, where the “ready to go” services are easily at our hands. While it all helps us to enjoy life, it makes us, however, impatient and less persistent with regard to things which do not come our way very quickly. The result is that, at the end, all this affects our spiritual life more than we think. We are annoyed with and tired of waiting on delays, as well as we give up quickly when commitments become demanding.

At the opposite of this attitude, all today’s readings teach us, each one in its own way, that persevering is a virtue, and that only those who persist can see their untiring prayers accepted and their desires fulfilled. First of all, the first reading describes the situation of Israel at war against a tribal enemy as they were about to enter the Promised Land. While Joshua engaged the battle, Moses prayed with hands raised imploring God’s assistance. As his hands grew tired, Aaron and Hur helped him so that he remained steady until victory was won.

The lesson we draw from the text is not that we have to ask God for strength to kill our enemies. On the contrary, the text teaches us that, in order to achieve goals that are beyond our reach and power, we need untiring and persistent prayers. When we let our arms down even for a moment, that is by stopping praying, we run the risk of being overwhelmed and, therefore, of being defeated by the force of evil.

The same message of persistence comes out of today’s parable of the wicked judge and the poor widow. The widow found justice only because she was determined and not discouraged by the indifferent attitude of the judge. Her insistence overcame his resistance, and at the end she obtained satisfaction.

What Jesus brings in this parable is not that God is indifferent to our prayers, nor is he deaf to the cry of our appeals, but rather he has his own time to act and intervene in our life. But he acts and intervenes especially for those who know how to persevere like the poor widow. In fact, if eventually the wicked judge gave in to the insistence of the widow, will not God do the same thing for his beloved ones who call out to him day and night”? Yes, “he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily.

In other words, the parable brings to our awareness the fact that persistence is a key to success in any undertaking of life. Only those who persevere can savor the fruit of their hard work. The same is also true in marriage as well as in our many commitments in society. We may find joy in the pleasures of the moment, but true happiness comes only with something of permanence. The happiest couples are not those hunting pleasures, but those who have persevered through the ups and the downs of life with faith and trust in God.

In that perspective, what the parable is asking of us is that we control our impatience, we learn to persevere in things we do. The drama of our culture is that, because we are used to quick results and fast services, we lose heart when there is a delay, for instance, when people do not change quickly, or when the situation does not change rapidly, etc. Our hurry may bring us trouble or

deteriorate the situation that would have been changed for the best if we had been patient. Sometimes a delay can be something good for us. For instance, God may delay his judgment on us so that we repent. He may delay his answer to our prayer so that we may give him everything we are. It is for that the parable is given so that we may always pray without becoming weary.

Another thing is that a good father sometimes refuses a request of a child, not because he does not love him or he is mean to him, but rather because he knows that what the child is asking would hurt him more than help him. God is sometimes like that with us. As we cannot control or foretell everything happening to us, God at times contains the answer to our prayers in order to keep us safe and on the right paths. After all, only God sees time wholly and entirely, and, therefore, only God knows what is good for us in the long run. That is why Jesus said that we should not be discouraged in prayer.

All that helps us understand, also, why Jesus is asking if human faith will stand the long delays before the Son of Man should come. Will the Son of Man find faith on earth, asks Jesus? That is the challenge to which each one of us is confronted, namely to be able to keep our faith alive and intact until Jesus comes back, even if meanwhile we do not have the immediate answer to our prayers, especially in the sense we would like it to be. Perhaps, the right way to pray should be: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

This claim allows me to talk about prayer. The prayer the Gospel is talking about is that conversation between the Lord and us which flows from our heart when confronted with the problems of life. In such perspective, to talk about one's suffering and misery, one's joys and expectations, is not to expose one's feelings, but to open ourselves to the One from whom comes our help (Ps 124, 8). In that condition, we can but pray with perseverance and persistence, knowing well that God will eventually answer us in his time.

Such a prayer draws its strength from the Sacred Scriptures we find in the Bible, as St Paul suggests to Timothy. The Scriptures open the way to God, they show us the right way to please God and to pray according to his will. They give us wisdom in order to deal rightly with the problems of life and acquire our salvation. Not only do Scriptures teach us, but they also help us find what is not correct in our relationship with the Lord and improve it. Finally, they train us in righteousness so that we belong to God with competence and equipped for every good work. For that reason, we should proclaim the word of God with persistence, whether it is convenient or inconvenient, so that each one may be convinced, encouraged and come to salvation. That is the grace we ask in this celebration. God bless you all!

**Exodus 17, 8-13; 2Timothy 3, 14-4, 2; Luke 18, 1-8**



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