

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2019

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of persistent prayer. They show that only those who open up to God with patience and perseverance can come to an answer to their prayer. They also invite us to work on the virtues of patience and perseverance in our relationship with God.

The first reading describes the difficult situation in which Israel found itself on their journey to the holy land. It shows what Moses did in order to come to victory over Amalek. It equally shows that without mutual support, perseverance and tenacity, it would be difficult for them to win over their enemies.

What is behind this text is the idea that persistent prayer obtains us God's blessings. There is also the idea that if we count only upon ourselves we cannot make it. The last idea is related to the truth that when we stop praying and persevering, we run the risk of being defeated by the evil one.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus tells the parable of the wicked judge and the poor widow. The Gospel starts with Jesus' invitation to his disciples to pray always without becoming weary.

Then, it gives a parable in which Jesus talks about the case opposing a widow to a judge. It shows in particular that, though the judge was unwilling to render a just decision against her adversary, he ended up listening to her because of her persistence.

The Gospel gives also Jesus' declaration that in the same way God will secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night by rendering them justice. Finally, the Gospel ends with Jesus' question whether at the return of the son of man he will find faith on earth.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about persevering prayer. The fact that Jesus invites the disciples to pray without becoming weary is an evident sign that perseverance and persistence play a big role in prayer.

In order to understand the point of Jesus, we have to bear in mind that perseverance presupposes that things do not follow automatically in the way we wish. There are always difficulties and obstacles that someone has to transcend before obtaining what he wants. That is why perseverance implies, in addition to persistence and insistence, waiting with patience for the fulfillment of what we are looking for.

Those attitudes are what Jesus wants us to have in our prayer. Those attitudes are exemplified in the parable by the way the widow conducts herself in the presence of the indifferent Judge. She is not discouraged; she does not give up until she gets what she wants. In insisting, she overcomes the resistance of the judge and obtains justice for her case.

The fact that the widow got what she wanted only after insistence and perseverance shows that God has his time to intervene in our problems and to respond to our prayer. What he wants is only that we persevere and continue knocking at his door, whatever time it may take.

In that sense, perseverance is important in our relationship with God, as well as it is a key factor to the success of any human endeavor. After all, it is only those who persevere who can succeed in what they undertake. All those who like the easy way, who are impatient and discouraged at the least of difficulties, they will never succeed.

This point is very important, because in a culture that likes quick results and fast services, people are always in hurry. When it comes to waiting a little bit for what they want or there is delay in what they desire, people become easily impatient and nervous. Some even renounce the pursuit of looking for what they wanted and put off for tomorrow what they would have done today.

And yet, God does not always play the same card as we do. He may delay things to happen to us for good reasons we do not know. He may delay his answer to our prayer so that we may give him everything we are. At times, he may reserve the answer to our prayer for later 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 and when it can happen to us. That is why Jesus said that we should never be discouraged in prayer.

In that perspective, waiting with patience is very important. But it means also that waiting is a time of trial where we have to remain persevering and faithful to our commitments in spite of the delay. That is why Jesus is asking if human faith will stand the long delays before the Son of Man comes back. Will the Son of Man find faith on earth, asks Jesus?

The challenge to which each one of us is confronted is that of being able to keep our faith alive until Jesus comes back, even if meanwhile we do not have the immediate answer to our prayers. We know that God who is good and merciful to us will eventually answer us.

With the help of friends and family, like Moses, we have to persevere in intercession prayer until victory is won. Encouraged by the example of the persevering widow, we have to pray constantly for ourselves and for others. Where there is a need, we have to voice our cry to God in petition. Where there is a blessing, we have to voice to God our cry of thanksgiving.

May the Lord help us persevere in our prayer and commitment until the day of his return! Let us ask him the grace of faithfulness in the waiting of the fulfillment of his promise. May God bless you all!

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



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