

XXIX (Oct 17) SUNDAY: Ex 17:8-13, II Tim 3:14- 4:5, Luke 18: 1-8

There is a story which illustrates how we often confuse God's timing with our own. A rural newspaper had been running a series of articles on the value of church attendance in its Sunday Religion column. One day, the editor received a letter which read: "Print this if you dare. I am trying an experiment. I have a field of corn which I plowed on Sunday. I planted it on Sunday. I did all the cultivating on Sunday. I gathered the harvest on Sunday and hauled it to my barn on Sunday. I find that my harvest this October is just as great as any of my neighbors who went to church on Sunday. So where was God all this time?" The editor printed the letter, but added his reply at the bottom: "Your mistake lies in thinking that God always settles his accounts in October." We who believe in the power of prayer often wrongly think that our persevering prayers will force God to act when and how we want Him to act, according to our timetable and according to our desire. (Rev. R. J. Fairchild)

Today's readings are mainly about prayer -- perseverance in prayer, constancy in prayer and trust in God as we pray. They are also about the trustworthiness and justice of God, a justice that reaches out to the poor and the weak, enabling them to fight against injustice. In the first reading, Moses, after sending Joshua to fight against Amalek, is presented as making tireless intercessions with constancy for the victory of Israel's army. Both Moses and the widow in today's gospel story teach us how we should pray. By introducing the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow in today's gospel, Jesus emphasizes the "*necessity of praying always and not losing heart.*" Constancy in prayer is faith in action. Jesus presents the widow in today's gospel as a model of the trust and tenacity with which his disciples are to pray. The widow was asking for something which God would certainly want for her - justice.

When Luke wrote this gospel the *Parousia* or Second coming of Jesus had been delayed beyond what the early church had expected. In addition, the church was experiencing persecution from both the Jews and the Romans. The persecuted early Christians were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their faith. Hence, today's gospel lesson addresses the issues of faith in difficult times. It reassures the disciples that God is listening to their persistent prayers and will grant them justice and vindicate their faith in the end. The Gospel today seems to be a classical example of the link between perseverance and blessing. Luke sets the story in the context of a challenge Jesus makes to his disciples to pray always and not lose heart, that is, to persevere in prayer and receive God's blessings.

It is ideal that we start our prayers by reading from the Bible, especially the Psalms and the gospels. Formal, by hearted and liturgical prayers are also essential for the Christian prayer life. Personal prayer is of great importance in our life of prayer. Talking to God in our own words, praising Him, thanking Him and presenting our needs before Him transform our whole life into prayer. We should perfect our prayers by bringing ourselves before God's presence during our work several times during the day and by offering all that we are and we have and we do to God. This will help us to bring all our successes and failures, joys and sorrows, highs and lows to God in prayer. Along with formal and by hearted prayers, this type of prayer life enables us to pray always and pray with constancy and trusting perseverance.

In *Priests for the Third Millennium*, Archbishop Timothy Dolan observes that prayer must become like eating and breathing. We have to eat daily, not stock up on food on Monday, and then take off the rest of the week. Do we take ten deep breaths and say, "Good, that's over for a while, I won't have to breathe for a couple of hours?"

God knows what to give, when to give and how to give it. Only God sees time whole, and, therefore, only God knows what is good for us in the long run. That is why Jesus said that we must never be discouraged in prayer. Instead we have to leave the answer to God's decision saying, "Thy will be done."

JOKE OF THE WEEK

A farmer entered the local Church and spoke to the Church secretary: "I'd like to speak to the Head Hog of the Trough." The secretary was quite taken aback and responded to the farmer, "Sir, we have no one here by that name." "If you are referring to the priest in charge of this parish, we always respectfully call him Father or Pastor." "Fine, ma'am, but I want to talk to the person who will take my \$25,000 donation for your church." Immediately the secretary responded, "Dearie!" Please take your seat and just wait a second. Our *Fat Pig* will be here with you in just a second!"