



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

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"...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth!" Luke 18:18

This parable is found only in Luke. Let's break open this gospel and look at a possible scenario for this persistent widow and the judge. That point is stated right at the beginning: *"the necessity of praying always and not losing heart."* As the last verse today indicates, this section is also set in the context of a discussion about the second coming of the Son of Man, appropriate as we enter the closing weeks of the liturgical year, culminating with the *Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe* on November 20th. In today's passage, Jesus reminds the disciples of the importance of continuing to pray and tells them to be faithful until that coming, no matter how long it takes.

First, Jesus teaches us through the example of the widow to pray persistently and not lose heart when it comes to wearing down the injustice in the world. Second, the widow, in Jesus' time, was the person left with nothing. She was powerless and represented the poorest of the poor. All she had was her voice of persistence. For Jesus she represented the voice of social conscience. The judge, on the other hand, had no conscience and could care less about her. But he did care about his reputation; a reputation that this woman had absolutely no authority over, yet could tarnish with what he viewed as her persistent nagging.

This shows the power of persistence, a gift of the Holy Spirit! This God-given charism in her case is what I call a *natured charism* set within her DNA given at the moment of her conception as opposed to *nurtured charisms*, those that are developed as we are influenced and taught by our family and community. To better develop this gift in us, Jesus inspires us through the witness of the widow's persistence. This widow had unstoppable faith. For persistence to work, faith has to be part of the equation. The formula starts with faith, which roots us firmly in hope, replacing our *"stony heart"* with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a fountain of love that is outpoured to bring comfort to the afflicted in times of need.

Faith, hope and love, the three primary virtues of the Church, are interlinked and necessary. When they are present, we endure through thick and thin, good times and bad. Faith comes to the soul that dwells in a Christ-centered community. It is the fertile ground from which hope blossoms. Hope, and the beauty that surrounds it, is the foundation for a persistent people that insist on justice in the world, even when the world around them seems terribly hopelessly unjust. But we, Christ's Church, are in fact the "persistent widow" that the world has abandoned. We raise our voices in prayers of petition every day, day in and day out, a persistent voice that echoes down through the ages. In the darkest of times, Christ's light shines forth and cannot be extinguished as long as we believe. We beg for justice. May our voice be forever strong and continue to echo down for all generations that follow us.

This week let us reflect on the Second Coming. Will the Son of Man find that we have been faithful and have been persistent, or will we have abandoned our faith? It is a question that just hangs there, waiting for us to answer. May we remain ever faithful to the promise God planted in our hearts.

All scripture is inspired by God. And may we who belong to God be inspired and equipped for every good work. Cf 2 Tim 3-15

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Jesus told the disciples a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said,

"In a certain city there was a judge
who neither feared God nor had respect for people.
In that city there was a widow
who kept coming to him and saying,
'Grant me justice against my opponent.'"

"For a while the judge refused;
but later he said to himself,
'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone,
yet because this widow keeps bothering me,
I will grant her justice,
so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"

And the Lord said,

"Listen to what the unjust judge says.
Will not God grant justice to his chosen ones
who cry to him day and night!
Will he delay long in helping them?
I tell you, God will quickly grant justice to them.
"And yet, when the Son of Man comes,
will he find faith on earth!"

The Gospel of the Lord

