

29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

By Al Mansfield

Exodus 17:8-13

Psalm 121

2 Timothy 3:14 - 4:2

Luke 18:1-8

PRAYER, FAITH, GOD'S WORD

Nothing fancy - just the basics. That's how we could describe the lessons in the readings today. Persistence in prayer, the importance of Scripture, the necessity of faith - are non-negotiable in the spiritual life.

EXODUS

The first reading takes place during the Exodus. The Amalekites were an ancient, warlike tribe that were the enemies of the Hebrews and attacked them at Rephidim, near Mount Sinai.

The point of this reading is Moses' unrelenting prayer with hands outstretched. As long as Moses kept his hands uplifted, Israel had the advantage in battle. But when Moses got tired and let his hands drop, Amalek fought better. Aaron and Hur came to help hold up Moses' hands until sunset. "And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."

The Responsorial, Psalm 121, reflects the sentiments of Moses' prayer for the Lord's help.

GOSPEL

Today's gospel is the parable of the Unrighteous Judge, who is continually bothered by a widow who wants the judge to decide a case in her favor. She is so persistent that the judge is getting worn out by her constant pressuring. The judge finally decides to "deliver a just decision for her," simply because he is afraid that she may resort to violence against him.

Jesus told this parable so that we would "pray always without becoming weary," that is to say, to keep on praying even when we're tired, as did Moses.

Jesus ends the parable by telling us that if an unrighteous judge responds to aggressive, persistent pestering, so will God! Ah, but there is a catch...the Lord is looking for one ingredient: "But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

2 TIMOTHY

For the past few Sundays, our second reading has been from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy. In today's selection, Paul emphasizes the need to base all teaching on Holy Scripture, which Timothy has known "from infancy."

Scripture is able to give "wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." St. Paul goes on to say that "all Scripture is inspired by God," and is eminently useful in pastoring and teaching.

Paul ends the passage by charging Timothy in the strongest possible way to "proclaim the word, be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient, convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching." Words as true, relevant, and necessary today as ever.

THE BASICS

Vince Lombardi, the legendary football coach, used to say: "Football is blocking and tackling. If you block and tackle better than the other team, you win." In other words, get the basics down well before taking on anything else.

The same could be said of the spiritual life. Prayer, faith, Scripture - they have to be at the beginning, middle, and end of our spirituality. The liturgy today drives that point home with an emphasis on persevering prayer, steadfast faith, and an immersion in God's written word of Scripture. May we never try to get so fancy that we forget the basics of "blocking and tackling."