

Prayer as a boxer in the Ring!

I hope we can all say we pray everyday! Its importance is shown to us in today's scripture and not only in today's scripture but throughout the bible prayer is central in keeping our relationship with God central, strong and intimate.

In the first reading (Ex 17:8-13), Moses holding up his arms in a gesture of prayer known as the *Orante position*. As long as Moses holds up his arms in prayer everything goes well. When Moses no longer holds up his arms in prayer there are problems. This gesture is a gesture of supplication, it is also a gesture of surrender. Knowing that Moses is seen as a precursor of Christ, I think we can see Moses holding up his arms in prayer as anticipating Christ holding up his arms in prayer on the Cross winning the battle over evil and sin for us. As Moses and his army were victorious over evil; as Christ is victorious over sin, death and Satan, when we raise our arms in prayer we too are strengthen for the battle as it rages every day against, sin and evil.

In the Gospel today (Luke 18:1-8), Jesus teaches a parable about the importance of constant prayer. The widow in the parable received her request because she was persistent. There is humor in the Greek that is not evident in the English translation; the judge gave in to the widow because if he did not, he feared she might give him a black eye (ὑπωπιάζῃ Luke 18:5). The Greek work used here is that **the widow is boxing for the win!** And as a widow, who has no power or standing on her own, she has only her stamina in the ring and the intestinal fortitude to keep on boxing until she is declared the winner!

In this same parable, Jesus gave a second lesson: if an unjust judge answers the pleas of a widow how much more will God answer our prayers. Whether perceived or not our prayers are always answered because God can give no other answer but one that is just and right and true. God sees the

overall plan and knows what is best even though we may sometimes have to wait to see or hear.

We have already heard this summer a parable on the need to be persistent in prayer. You might remember; earlier Jesus told a parable about a man going to his friend in the middle of night to ask for bread, and even though at first the friend may not want to get up, if he persists his friend will get up and give him the bread (Luke 11:5-8). Next Sunday we will hear another parable on prayer, the Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14), reminding us that our prayer is to be humble.

Prayer is very important in Luke's Gospel. In Luke's Gospel we see Jesus in prayer more often than in the other Gospels. Luke teaches us that prayer was central in the life of Jesus and ought to be central in our lives too. The list I am about to give is Jesus at prayer and found only in Luke: Jesus was *praying* after his baptism when the heavens opened (Luke 3:21); after the cure of the leper Jesus withdrew to the wilderness and *prayed* (Luke 5:16); Jesus spent all night on the hills in *prayer* before he chose the Twelve (Luke 6:12-16); Jesus was *praying* alone when he asked the disciples "Who do the people say I am?" (Luke 9:18-22); eight days later he took Peter, James, and John and went up on the mountain to *pray* (Luke 9:28) and while *praying* he was transfigured (Luke 9:29); Jesus was *praying* when his disciples asked him to teach them to pray so he taught them the "our Father", the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-4); Jesus *prayed* for Simon that his faith might not fail (Luke 22:32); only Luke tells us that Jesus *prayed* for his crucifiers (Luke 23:34), and as he died committed his spirit into the hands of Father (Luke 23:46). In Luke's second book known as, the Acts of the Apostles, we see the Church at prayer many times. So, the disciples in Acts are doing what Jesus the master did in the Gospel. Once again, I think we can see this as Luke teaching us: prayer was central in Jesus' life and ought to be central in our lives also.

How do we pray? Well daily and often. We pray the prayer Jesus gave us, we pray the Mass and our many devotions

For our meditations and Holy Hours, **hopefully, we make good use of Sacred Scripture to feed our prayer.** Therefore, our second reading today reminds us of the importance of Scripture and its use:

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

The importance of Sacred Scripture was emphasized by St. Jerome the patron saint of Scripture study who wrote, “**Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.**” *Dei Verbum* 21 of Vatican II, and the Catechism (**§104**) state, “**In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.**” So, when we use Sacred Scripture to aid our prayer, our Father comes to meet us and talks with us.

Prayer was central in the life of Jesus as we see especially in the Gospel of Luke. That centrality of prayer continues in the life of the disciples in Acts.. Jesus taught the Parable of the Persistent Widow about the importance of constant prayer. We are to be as constant in prayer as that widow, even to the point of persistence like a boxer in the ring.

So good fight the “Good Fight” with the power of the Spirit on our side, “we can do all things in Him who has love us.”