

Reflecting on the Sunday's Readings

Persistent Prayer

29th Sunday in Ordinary times~ Year C. 10/20/2019

Exodus 17:8-132 Timothy 3:14-4:2 Luke 18:1-8

Rev. Mr. Peter B. Swan



Our Gospel passage for today ends with Jesus asking a haunting question, ***“But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”*** I think it depends on us. Doesn't it? Faith is a gift we receive from God in Baptism. We all learn that, somewhere back in school or in one of our religious education classes. But who is responsible for developing that faith in us? Well, there has been priest and religious men and women assigned to our parishes and schools, catechists, religious education teachers perhaps, maybe friends and acquaintances by their examples and or encouragements. And then there is our family, particularly our parents. **The family is the unique school of prayer** where the most lasting lessons are learned. **Moms and dads**, you have no idea the tremendous impact you have on your children's awareness and love of God. By attending Church as a family, by the way you answer important and deep questions, by the way you live your everyday lives...You are passing on a living faith.

Today's gospel reminds us that our own perseverance in praying keenly demonstrates our faith. Many Catholics don't persevere in prayer. We're content on praying "a little," saying a Hail Mary or two at the beginning or the end of the day. **Others would like to pray more** but they think they don't have time to pray. Others, because of a bad experience or other reasons, stop praying altogether, only turning to prayer in times of crisis. Jesus, urges us to persevere in our prayers and to never lose heart. Surely, God will bring about the fullness of His Kingdom in His very own time. **For the kingdom, the power and the glory are His** -- and will be ours as well—**now and forever!** This is the faith of our fathers. This is our faith.

We have to keep praying. We can't give up, even when, especially when, it seems that our prayers are not being heard. The problem is that we are living in a world where everything is stuck in the fast forward mode. We are used to getting immediate results. (Just as Fr. Marty has demonstrated several times) We have a question, we Google it, and immediately an answer appears. This is fine for the physical life, but prayer is not physical. **It is spiritual.** **When we pray**, we are calling upon God to fulfill our needs, not Google to give us an answer. We must be mindful and persevere in our prayers. We must also accept the fact that prayer does not always result in a request granted. But perseverance in prayer strengthens rather than diminishes faith. **I have a sign on my office wall** that reads, ***“I prayed for strength, I got pain to make me strong. I prayed for courage, I got fear to overcome. I prayed for faith, my empty heart brought me to my knees. I don't always get what I want, I get what I need.”*** Our needs will be met, but not always in the way we expect, but better than our expectations

We need to pray for our Church. We need to pray for vocations to the priesthood, the diaconate and religious life. We need priests and deacons. We need sisters and

brothers. We need our bishops, including our pope, to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We all need to pray for Holy Mother the Church.

We need to pray for our country that it will truly be one nation under God. You and I want our children to live in a country where people are united in caring for each other, not divided into various groups of bigotry and hatred. You and I want our children to live in a world where there is respect, respect for life and respect for each other. Right now our country is broken and we are going through grim times. This does not give us the right to just give up on our country. **We need to pray for our world and our country**, continually asking God to soften hearts that have turned hard as stone.

We need to pray for our young people. They are both the present and the future of the Church. The next battle for the Kingdom of God will be waged and fought by the young. They want to live for God. They are determined to be heroes for Christ. To do all this, they have to withstand the horrible pressure they experience every day to give up and give in. We have a responsibility to pray for the young. **And they have a responsibility** to pray for us. And if they fall, we need to lift them up with our prayers. Likewise, if we fall, they need to lift us up. We cannot give up on prayer. We cannot give up on God.

A young man I was talking to at one time said, "But Deacon, it is so hard to keep on praying. It is so hard to keep on going without seeing any results. Sometimes it is downright exhausting. Most times, I just give up. Is that bad?" he asked. See, the problem with the young man and for most of us, is not in our badness but in our busyness. Most days, we don't pray simply because we don't quite get around to it. We just don't have the time. Perhaps, the best way to describe our hurried and distracted lives is that of a car wash. When you pull up to an automatic car wash, you are instructed to leave your motor running, to take your hands off the steering wheel, and to keep your foot off the brakes. **The machine will suck you through.**

For most of us, that is just what our typical day does to us. It sucks us through. We have our smartphones and radios that stimulate us before we are fully awake in the morning. Many of us are texting friends, checking Facebook and e-mails, watching the news, or listening to music or talk radio before we even shower or eat breakfast. **The drive to work** or school follows the same pattern: stimulated and preoccupied, we listen to the radio, talk on our cell phones, and plan the day's agenda. We return home to television, conversation, and preoccupations of all kinds. Eventually, we go to bed, where perhaps we read or watch a bit more TV. Finally, we fall asleep. When, in all of this, did we take time to think, to pray, to wonder, to be restful, to be grateful for life, for love, for healthfor God? You see, the day just

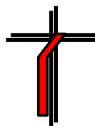
sucked us through, just like a car wash. And come tomorrow, we will return to the same car wash and repeat the cycle again.

Today's readings remind us to persevere faithfully in prayer. We need to make the commitment to set aside some fixed times for a one-on-one appointment with the Lord each day for our "mental prayer," a time in which we spend time with God, quietly listening to him speak to us and responding to him with faith. The key is to make the appointment and treasure it as the most important appointment of our day. And if you are having a problem dedicating and setting time aside a set time to be with the Lord, come see me. **I have an APP for that.**

The prayer of petition is a very noble form of prayer acknowledging our dependence on God our Father and creator. And so, as we continue with our liturgy and as we approach the Lord's table to be one with him in the Eucharist, let us ask the Father to give us the faith to believe in his promises and give us perseverance and hope to withstand trials and adversities. Ask him to help us to trust in his unfailing love and to find joy and contentment in him alone. **Let us ask him for the wisdom** to teach and to pass on our faith tradition to our younger generations and the courage to place our violence in the hands of a God who invites us not to condemn or to hate but to love and forgive. And as always, let us ask him to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our actions.

"But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" You know, I really do believe that when Jesus returns, he **will** find faith on earth, because ... he will ... find you.

The Lord is on Watch. He is always near. The Lord is my Shepherd. I Walk with no Fear. May God Bless each and every one of you!



Rev. Mr. Peter B. Swan