

Sunday, October 16, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Exodus 17:8-13

Responsorial: Psalm 121:1-8

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

Gospel: Luke 18:1-8

Being Vigilant, Persistent, and Faithful in Prayer

When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? (Luke 18:8)

What a peculiar way to end this parable! Why did Jesus link his second coming to the story of a persistent widow? Let's look at a couple of possible answers.

Perhaps this widow represents the Church. While we have been given the Eucharist, the Scriptures, and many other gifts and blessings, we are still waiting for Jesus to return. While we wait, we can feel as if we are "aliens and sojourners," living apart from our true home (1 Peter 2:11). We can feel quite defenseless against temptation and the lies of the devil. At times we can feel as desperate for help as this widow, longing for deliverance.

Do you think life will be this way when Jesus comes again? Not at all! He will usher in a perfect world marked by peace and harmony. There will be no more sickness, divorce, poverty, division, war, or death. The wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the goat, and the calf and the lion will all live together peacefully (Isaiah 11:6). When Jesus comes again, life is going to be fantastic, beyond our wildest imagination!

This is where a second possibility comes in: We as a Church must be vigilant until the day when Jesus returns. Like the widow, the challenging circumstances that we live in call for one response: persistence, especially in prayer. We need to pray every day, "Come, Lord Jesus!" And we need to pray continually for our daily bread, for forgiveness, and for strength against temptation.

The application of this parable to our daily lives is much less about Jesus finding faith when he returns and much more about our call to be persistent and hopeful in prayer. May we all pray for an outpouring of grace upon the Church and the world. May we all be vigilant in prayer so that we won't fall to temptation. May we all keep our hearts aflame for him as we persist in prayer for his return in glory.

"Lord, help us to persevere and put our whole hope in you until the day you come again."

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, we see that whenever Moses' intervention and intercession on behalf of his people was strong, "Israel had the better of the fight" and whenever it flagged, those people he was charged with leading and protecting began to falter. Each of us, no matter what our state in life, has responsibilities for others, whether they be family, friends, or work associates.
 - How constant are you in praying on their behalf?
 - How could you improve?
2. Also in the first reading, notice that Moses can't do it alone. Without Aaron and Hur to support his raised hands when they grew tired, the outcome of the battle with Amalek would have been a disaster. Moses, the man who parted the Red Sea and spoke to God face-to-face, still needed the support of others to be victorious over his enemies.
 - Do you believe that you too need the support of other Christian men or women if you are to engage in and win your own spiritual battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil?
 - If you are not already involved in a faith sharing group in your parish, are you willing to consider joining one or even forming one? If not, why not?
 - What occasions can you plan in the upcoming weeks to get together with others to pray together and to support each other? What would prevent you from doing this?
3. In the responsorial psalm, we read that the Lord "neither slumbers nor sleeps" in his ever vigilant protection. Also, he is our "help," our "shade," our "guardian," "he is beside you at your right hand," and "the Lord will guard your coming and your going both now and forever."
 - In light of these wonderful truths, what steps might you take to focus your thoughts more on the Lord during the day?
4. In the second reading, St. Paul tells Timothy of the importance of "sacred Scripture" because it 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."
 - How has Scripture been useful to you for "teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training"?
 - What are some additional steps you can take to better incorporate Scripture reading into your daily prayer and your daily routines?
5. The Gospel's parable contrasts the "dishonest judge" with our loving Father who so wants to shower us with his love.
 - Do you see God as a harsh judge waiting to punish you whenever you falter, or do you see him as a loving Father that hears you when you "call out to him day and night"? Why?
 - How does your view of God the Father affect how you live out your life each day?
6. The meditation on the "Parable of the Persistent Widow" ends with these words: "The application of this parable to our daily lives is much less about Jesus finding faith when he returns and much more about our call to be persistent and hopeful in prayer. May we all pray for an outpouring of grace upon the Church and the world. May we all be vigilant in prayer so that we won't fall to temptation. May we all keep our hearts aflame for him as we persist in prayer for his return in glory."
 - How do these words apply to your own life?
 - What new steps can you take to be more persistent, hopeful, and vigilant in your prayer life?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to persevere in prayer like the "persistent widow." Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Lord, help us to persevere and put our whole hope in you until the day you come again."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also

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