

Sunday, October 20, 2019

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Praying for and Supporting One Another in Christ

As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight. (Exodus 17:11)

Wouldn't it be nice to have a direct way to know that your prayers are being heard? Moses had it: hands up, the Israelites win the battle. Hands down, they lose. It was as simple as that. But Moses couldn't persevere on his own. He needed help to hold his hands high.

This story tells us that we all need support at times. It can be very tiring to keep praying. It takes a lot out of us. That's why we can all appreciate the image of Aaron and Hur holding up Moses' hands as he prayed for the Israelites' victory in battle. His friends stood by him and helped him do what he couldn't do on his own.

The truth is, each one of us needs our brothers and sisters in Christ to hold us up. They help us persevere. You can probably recall times when you've reached out to a friend and asked him to pray with you for something important. His support meant a lot to you.

When you don't see an immediate answer to your prayers, your friends, like Moses' friends, can help you perceive the field of battle more clearly and draw your attention to the ways God is already working. They might remind you of specific times that God has answered your prayers—or theirs—in the past. And when you feel completely in the dark, they can stand with you and pray with you as you do your best to keep moving forward. You can do the same for them too.

So don't go it alone! Maybe you already have someone who can stand with you in prayer, a friend who will join her voice to yours as you intercede. But if not, ask the Lord for someone to partner with you. He loves to send people who will be there to hold you up.

“Thank you, Lord, for the gift of friendships in the body of Christ.”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading describes the impact of Moses' intercession, on behalf of his people, in the war waged by Amalek against Israel. The reading ends with these words: *As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight. Moses' hands, however, grew tired; so they put a rock in place for him to sit on. Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, so that his hands remained steady till sunset. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.*
 - Why do you believe that Moses, the man who parted the Red Sea and spoke to God face-to-face, needed the support of Aaron and Hur to be victorious over his enemies? In what way does the message of this reading apply to you as well?
 - 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?
 - 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. The responsorial psalm begins as follows: *I lift up my eyes toward the mountains; whence shall help come to me? My help is from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* It ends with these words: *The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade; he is beside you at your right hand. The sun shall not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will guard you from all evil; he will guard your life. The LORD will guard your coming and your going, both now and forever.*
 - What does it mean to you that the Lord 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 great truths, what steps might you take to focus your thoughts more on the Lord during the day?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul tells Timothy of the importance of *sacred Scripture: 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.* The reading ends with these words: *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.*
 - How has Scripture been useful to you for *teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness*?
 - What are some additional steps you can take to better incorporate Scripture reading into your daily prayer/routines?
 - What are some of the ways you *proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching*?
4. The Gospel reading begins with these words: *Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.* Jesus then tells the parable of a dishonest judge and a persistent widow. The reading ends with these words: *The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*
 - In what ways does Jesus use his parable to contrast the *dishonest judge*" with our loving Father who so wants to answer our prayers and shower us with his love as we *call out to him day and night*?
 - 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?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the first reading and includes these words: "Moses couldn't persevere on his own. He needed help to hold his hands high. This story tells us that we all need support at times. It can be very tiring to keep praying. It takes a lot out of us. That's why we can all appreciate the image of Aaron and Hur holding up Moses' hands as he prayed for the Israelites' victory in battle. His friends stood by him and helped him do what he couldn't do on his own. The truth is, each one of us needs our brothers and sisters in Christ to hold us up. They help us persevere."
 - Why do you think that whenever Moses' intervention for his people was strong, *Israel had the better of the fight*?
 - Do you believe that "we all need support at times" from other Christian men or women if we are to engage in and win our own spiritual battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil? Why is this so?
 - If you are not already involved on a regular basis with a faith sharing group in your parish, are you willing to consider joining one or even forming one? If not, why not?

Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for the many Christian friends who have, and are supporting, you. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Thank you, Lord, for the gift of friendships in the body of Christ."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry.]