

29th Sunday of the Year [C] 2025

(St. Rose, QP)

Today is World Mission Sunday. In our New Testament lesson this morning, one of the great missionaries of all time, Paul of Tarsus, encourages Timothy and all of us to “remain faithful to what you have learned and believed,” but not to leave it there, but to take it to the ends of the earth. He urges us to “preach the word... constantly,” even when it is inconvenient. That is the vocation of a true missionary.

Earlier this week Pope Leo insisted that we all must be missionaries and that every Catholic parish in the world should take part in World Mission Sunday. Our baptism demands it. The Holy Father commented that “When I served as a missionary priest and Bishop in Peru, I saw first-hand how the faith, the prayer and the generosity shown on World Mission Sunday can transform entire communities.” Let us be instruments of God’s grace.

Today’s readings are mainly about **prayer**—perseverance in prayer, constancy in prayer and trust in God as we pray. They are also not just about our end of this, but about God too—that God is always trustworthy and that God’s justice reaches out to the poor and the weak, and gives them the strength to fight against injustice.

In the O.T. passage we have a war story about Moses. The old man, probably in his 80’s leading his people to the Promised Land, is pictured making intercessions for his people while Joshua fights the battle against Amalek. It is almost a humorous scene—the old man tiring while holding his arms out in the traditional Jewish prayer posture, then two guys, Aaron and Hur, helping out by holding his arms out for him.... Moses knew that only God could and would save them. He was foreshadowing Jesus, who would stretch out his arms on the cross and conquer, not the Amelikites, but Satan, sin and death.

In the second reading Paul was telling Timothy and all of us, to persevere in prayer and the practice of the faith. At the time Paul was writing, various groups were pressuring Timothy to water down the doctrines of faith. So Paul was telling him: “You can’t do that, Timothy. This is the truth. Stick with it. Preach the word, stay with the task, whether convenient or inconvenient, whether they want to hear it or not.”

Finally, we hear Jesus tell a parable about an unjust judge and a persistent widow, giving that famous line: “pray always and do not lose heart.” Jesus presents this widow as a model of trust and tenacity. She was asking for something, which God would certainly want for her—Justice. So, Jesus is telling his disciples, “This is how *you* should be. Stick with it.”

When Luke wrote this Gospel, 45-50 years after Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension, the Second Coming, which all the disciples were expecting, had obviously not happened. And on top of that, the Church was experiencing persecution from both the Jews and the Romans. The persecuted early Christians were finding it harder and harder to maintain their faith. So the parable in this gospel passage is meant to address the issues of faith in difficult times and reassures the disciples that God is listening to their persistent prayers and will grant them justice and vindicate their faith in the end. It was a message they desperately needed to hear.

Luke seems to be the first of the Scripture writers to come to the conclusion that he and everyone in his community will die a natural death before Jesus returns for the judgment. That is why throughout his Gospel and his other book, the *Acts of the Apostles*, he emphasizes persistence in faith. In other words, God will take care of *his* obligations, and our job is to take care of *our* obligations. God will vindicate us, his persecuted community, provided we stay watchful and persevere in faith and prayer.

If the persistent pleading of a helpless widow can be so effective, how much more will the persistent pleading of the Christian disciple achieve, since the other end of the prayer is not an unjust judge, but our loving Father? Pray always and never lose heart, Jesus says. Pray always....

Saint Teresa of Calcutta insisted that her sisters begin each day with the bedrock of solid prayer, especially the Mass and meditation, even before tending to the needs of the poor, their daily mission. She knew that without perseverance in prayer, her sisters could not hold up in their task of caring for the poorest of the poor.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the gregarious archbishop of New York, who is a friend of Bishop Thomas and no stranger to our diocese, has written a book called *Priests for the Third Millennium*. In the book he writes that “prayer must become like eating and breathing. We have to eat daily, not stock up on food on Monday, and then take off the rest of the week. Do we take ten deep breaths and say, ‘Good, that’s over for a while. I won’t have to breathe for a couple of hours?’ So too with prayer. It is just as essential to our healthy life as eating and breathing.”

These are trying times in our country and in our world. So many people are throwing up their hands and saying, “What are we to do?” I think Jesus’ answer from today’s gospel is pretty clear. As we gather here today to pray the greatest of prayers, the Eucharist, may we gain the strength to be as persistent as Moses, as Paul and Timothy, as the poor widow in Jesus’ story. May we “pray always and never lose heart.”