

## HOMILY for 29<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

This Sunday's readings talk about prayer and how we should do it. As I reflect on that message, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Worshippers at All Saints Church were invited to a special Advent Study Session on Prayer. At the close of the course, Pastor Pete invited the participants to write sentence prayers. Here are some of those prayers:

"Lord, help me to relax about insignificant details – beginning at 9:41:23 AM, EST."

"God, help me to consider people's feelings, even if most of them are hypersensitive."

"Father, help me take responsibility for my own actions, even though they're usually not my fault."

"Dear God, help me not to try to run everything. But, if you need some help, feel free to ask me."

"Lord, help me to be more laid back, and help me do it exactly right."

"Heavenly Father, please help me take things more seriously, especially having a good time."

"God, give me patience, and I mean right now!"

"Lord, help me not to be a perfectionist (Did I spell that correctly?)."

"Lord, help me open to other's ideas, wrong though they may be."

"Dear God, help me to slowdownandnotrushthroughwhatIdo."

Amen.

Anyway, I dare to say that everyone has come to God & prayed for something or someone sometime in their lives. The fact is that we cannot do everything in this life all by ourselves. For we all need God's help & guidance on this earthly journey. Some need it more than others. Even the rich & powerful have come to God at some point in their lives. If someone says that he/she has never prayed before, that person is not telling the truth. Even the two robbers who were crucified on both sides of Jesus came to Him & made their personal prayers to Him. It is the topic of prayer that this Sunday's readings want to talk to us about. In fact, today's Gospel says this about prayer, "Jesus told His disciples a parable on the necessity of praying always & not losing heart... The Lord then said, '...Will not God do justice to His chosen who call out to Him day & night? Will He delay long over them, do you suppose? I tell you, He will give them swift justice.'" Apparently Jesus advises His followers to pray often & keep doing it without losing heat. Why does He give us that advice?

Before we answer that question, let's take a look at the parable in today's Gospel that Jesus used to talk to us about prayer. Jesus compared our praying habit to a widow who had come to a powerful, mean judge & asked for her case to be reviewed & answered. This judge kept ignoring her & refused to answer her request. That is how we might feel about our prayers at times. They do not seem to be answered the way we want. We feel that God might have ignored or refused to respond to our prayers like that powerful judge did. Most people would give up on coming to that judge & walk away from their prayer requests altogether. But, this is where we & the whole world could have learned from the widow. Jesus wanted to use the example of this persistent woman & encourage us to keep on praying even if our prayer might seem to be ignored. Because of her patience & persistence, the widow got the judge to listen to her case. Here is how the judge decided to do: "...This widow is wearing me out. I am going to

settle in her favor or she will end by doing me violence.” So, the judge finally gave in & answered the widow’s plea.

This Gospel story reminds me of the story of the turtle & the hare. The turtle won out on its race with the hare because it was patient & steady. Likewise, the widow was patient & persistent in making her request to the judge who finally gave in & listened to her case. That is how we should approach prayer & look up to that widow as our inspiring role model. We should not quit praying after our prayer was not answered the first time or the second time. We must continue to come to God with our prayer request until it gets answered.

Another inspiring example to encourage us to keep up our prayer life can be found with Moses in today’s First Reading. As you might recall, Moses was always prayerful & faithful in his duties to God & the people of God. He spent many days & nights on Mount Sinai to prepare himself before God granted him the Ten Commandments. He was a great prayer warrior & led the people of God to pray for various things, from being led out of Egypt safely to building up a secured, prosperous home country. In case we cannot see how persistent Moses was with his prayer life, today’s First Reading gives us a good example for that. Evidently Moses was helping the people of God to pray for a victorious fight against their enemy. The Book of Exodus reads, “Amalek came & waged war against Israel... So, Joshua did as Moses told him. He engaged Amalek in battle after Moses had climbed to the top of the hill with Aaron & Hur. 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 & Hur supported his hands, one on each side.” That is how persistent & dedicated Moses was with his prayer life. He did not give up on prayer even when he was physically exhausted. He kept his hands raise up to Heaven to ask God for the protection of the people of God. He is a great example for us on how to pray.

As we heard earlier, Jesus encourages us to pray without losing heart. For He knows that we tend to give up on praying once we do not get what we ask for. We do not have enough patience & endurance to keep coming to God to ask for the same thing month after month like the widow in today’s Gospel did. We let our daily worries make us doubt God’s love for us & disrupt our prayer life. We often follow the way of the world & demand instant answer for our prayer. But, we all know that prayer does not work that way. Most of the prayers in the Bible took a long time for them to be answered. The people of God had to wait for forty years to get to the Promised Land or for many generations to get their desirable Messiah. Many prayers might not even get answered at all. That is why Jesus advises us to keep on praying even if we feel that our prayer request has been ignored.

My dear brothers & sisters, our prayer might go unanswered or demand us more patience & trust. But, we should look up to the widow in today’s Gospel or Moses in today’s First Reading & keep on praying in spite of our frustration & disappointment. If we can do that, our prayer will be answered sooner or later.