

29<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time  
October 20, 2019

Readings:

Exodus 17:8-13

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

Luke 18:1-8

Fr. Bob

I think many people approach God in their prayer in the example that we're given in our Gospel reading. God, to many, is like that judge that Jesus referred to as the dishonest judge. The woman kept coming to him to plead her case and he showed no interest in her or whether or not her cause was just. But she kept returning, she kept pleading her case and probably each time she grew more intense as she appeared before that judge. In the end, she finally wore the judge down and he settled her case, basically so he would not be bothered by her again.

And Jesus is fairly clear. We should not approach God with the attitude that he is far off or does not hear our prayers. God is not unjust but rather the source of justice. And perhaps on a more important level, the sheer multiplication of our prayers will not wear God down. And we cannot manipulate God by our words. Jesus calls for another approach and that's a reminder of who God is. He contrasts the dishonest judge with the honesty and goodness of the Lord. And in our prayer, there is something we need to keep remembering. It's an aspect of prayer that perhaps we often forget.

Prayer is not just about petition and asking for what we want, although the Lord does tell us to bring before him our needs. And it's acceptable to ask for what we want. But we have to remember that prayer is also meant to be something that changes us and changes our lives. Prayer, fasting and pilgrimages for example, do not change the will of God for us. But they are meant to change the person who does those things. They are tools that can make us more receptive to the movement of God in the challenges of everyday life. While we often do not know the mind or the will of God, we often know our own thoughts and desires. We can usually pinpoint what needs recrafting or reshaping in us so that we might live out the goodness and love of God more clearly. Confronting the obstacles, with God in our minds and hearts, confronting challenges, with God, confronting doubt with God can be a very powerful thing that offers us conversion and change of heart. When we bring before God all things about ourselves then we place ourselves at his mercy and his love. When we bring before God in our prayer all things then we place ourselves in the hands of a God that we can trust.

And in our Gospel reading Jesus urges us not to lose heart but to pray always and hold onto faith even when things get tough. What's important in our first reading is not that Moses provided a victory for his people by the action of keeping his hands raised in a magical way. What is important is that Moses and the people trusted in God, when they were winning as well as when things seemed to be failing. God is not like the dishonest judge. He hears our petitions and our prayers and in his time he answers them.

But the example of the woman is what we need to hear today. In a sense, she offered her prayer and did it with the persistence that we need to have throughout our lives. She did not give up, she did not surrender. And she was rewarded by finding the change in her life that she needed. May we be a people of prayer. May we be a people of persistence. May we bring before God all that we are. And then wait for him to bring us change in our hearts and in our minds.