

October 20, 2019 - Homily Notes – 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Theme: Persistence in Life and in Prayer

Readings: Ex 17:8-13, 2 Tim 3:14-4:2, Lk 18:1-8

1. Summary: As we journey with Jesus toward Jerusalem as his disciples, we obtain a valuable lesson in how vigorous and how persistent we must be in life in order to gain success in general, and how diligent and persistent we must be in prayer in order to gain success over sin and evil.

Example of friend seeking a good woman to marry. Two weeks of prayer is not enough!

2. Notes on the readings:

Ex 17:8-13 – “Victory over Amalek” The prayers of Moses are one of the greatest examples of **intercessory prayer** (supplication). (See CCC, #2574 – 2577 on “Moses and the prayer of the mediator.”)

Important notes: Remember the example of Moses when people do not want to confess to a priest.

Moses instructed Joshua when and how to enter into battle.

Even Moses needed help to keep his arms raised. Are we willing to support our intercessors?

This is a good example of how the Christian life is not only an individual journey, but a journey that needs companions.

3. At the same time that we know that “there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5), we also recognize the great tradition and example of great religious leaders who were necessary intermediaries between their people and God. In the New Testament we see how St. Paul interceded for the people (2 Thess 1:11, Col 1:3, Phil 1:3-4), especially involving the forgiveness of sins (John 20:19-23).

4. God wants us to learn how to cooperate with his grace. Prayer is not often answered immediately. This may be because of the nature of the enemy or the battle. Moses’ prayer in this situation is a model of constant effort. At any moment in the Christian life, one can encounter many obstacles and difficulties of all kinds, not just military. Moses had to have his hands raised in intercession for the Israelites to win. He could not do it alone. He had to have help from Aaron and Hur who obtained the rock for him to sit on and who held up his arms.

Are we willing to persevere in prayer, not for ourselves alone, but for our neighbors also?

We need to remember that Monica had to pray to St. Augustine for 17 years.

5. 2 Tim 3:14 – The functions of Sacred Scripture. Scripture is described as “a two edged sword.” Sacred Scripture is one of our most important weapons in spiritual warfare. This entire paragraph is an exaltation of the importance of the Bible in the life of the Church. Often we must engage in prayer for a long time because no one is using Sacred Scripture for correction and direction, or because the heart of the one to be corrected has become very hardened. Sometimes we are not using all our weapons in the battle.

6. A Caution: Notice that this passage does not say that we are to be guided by Scripture Alone. It is laying out various very important functions of Sacred Scripture. But see, 2 Thess 2:15,

“Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.”

7. This reading does say, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for *teaching, refutation, correction and training in righteousness*, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work”. Pastors and deacons, including catechists must preach and teach the Word, being

persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient, convincing, reprimanding, encouraging through all patience and teaching.” In this function also, perseverance is tremendously important.

8. Matthew Kelly is helpful in understanding and getting going better in prayer (See *Rediscover Catholicism; Chapter 13; Daily Prayer*). First Kelly warns us that “prayer is perhaps the most difficult thing we will ever do...for the most part prayer is hard work.”

9. Kelly observes different reasons for praying: First, for him might be for selfish reasons: for when he needs help or calming down. A second reason might be for help for other persons. Sometimes he prays to express gratitude to God. And at his best he might pray “simply to be with God and seek his ways.” Kelly says he also prays for practical reasons; to make sense of things, in order to live life deeply and deliberately, and finally to build up inner spiritual strength in order to counteract our culture. He calls this “inner density” (p. 166).

10. Additionally we need to pray because “Thought Determines Action.” Unless we are responding purely by habit or reflex, we must think before we act. So we must pay careful attention to what we are thinking about, because that will determine our future actions.

11. Do we wish to keep Jesus Christ at the center of our lives? Is this not a constant struggle to do so? Prayer is a way of directing our thought to be constantly with God. Kelly says that his thoughts always wander before his actions do. “Thought determines action, and before too long, you will be living out what has already happened in your mind. Human thought is creative. What we think becomes.” “If you can direct what happens in your mind, you can massively influence what happens in your life and completely direct how you respond to what happens in your life.”

12. This has consequences! Kelly says that “Whatever you place your mental attention on will increase in your life. If you place your attention on money, you will have more money (hope, hope). If you place your attention on virtue, you will have more virtue.” So Saint Paul guides us (Phil 4:8):

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

13. Therefore, Kelly challenges us to become aware of what we are thinking about and what the consequences these thoughts will have. He says, “You cannot grow an oak tree with an apple seed. You cannot grow a good life with bad thoughts. Certain thoughts give birth to certain actions.”

14. How to be able to hear God? Kelly challenges us to silence and how to use silence. He says that our world is full of noise and that noise distracts us. Is that true? When does noise come from in your life? Kelly challenges us to getting times of silence. In particular, he invites to structure at least ten minutes of silence into our lives every day so we will have some time to listen to God.

15. There are some ways to structure that time. One way is to be aware of different kinds of prayer to have with God; One outline is ACTS – adoration (gratitude), confession, thanksgiving (gratitude), and supplication (for what I or others need).

16. A reflection on Catholic prayer. The most common Catholic prayers provide a lot of input for objectively relating to God: the Mass, the Breviary, the Rosary, other time-tested prayers. If we just think on our own, we can get involved with ourselves psychologically, not so much with God.

17. I invite us to take our lives in hand and structure them so we will have time for prayer, for conversation with God, away from the needs of the world. Share with me what is your plan!