

29th Sunday OT – Luke 18:1-8

Instead of being a person exploited and without resources, as widows are usually portrayed in scripture, she was active, enterprising and persistent. She won her cause by allowing the judge no peace, who had power to help her. This judge fell far short of the ideal of the judge in Israel; he neither feared God nor respected man. He only gave way and did his duty to save himself further battering from the widow. The word he uses is taken from boxing; he did not want a black eye!

The Christian is to pray, "Your Kingdom come." This prayer is not made to an unjust judge nor to a friend in bed at midnight, but *to a loving and watchful Father*. The prayer is for the vindication of all those in this world who suffer injustice like the widow in the parable. Such prayer is to be accompanied by action such as the widow took. God will surely vindicate his faithful if they pray to him *day and night* like the widow. Meanwhile, ***prayer for an increase of faith must continue.*** Faith is what the Son of Man will be looking for when he returns to this world.

From *Give Us This Day*, Jessica Coblentz writes, "The Gospel is simple, but not easy." Jesus' teaching on prayer exemplifies this truth. His instruction to the disciples is simple: ***Pray always without becoming weary***, and God will bring about justice." I would like to add that Saint Ignatius' advises us to do whatever we can as if everything depended on ourselves and pray as if everything depended on God.

She continues, "Our Jewish forbearer, Moses, provides a useful and inspiring model. Like Jesus' disciples, Moses takes on a simple task. When his raised arms grow tired, Moses does not resign in failure as we might be tempted to do. Instead, the faithful leader joins with others to persevere. Offering a place for Moses to sit and for their own strength to support each of his hands, Moses' companions enable him to carry out a task he is unable to do on his own."

In a way that is what we do when we come to Eucharist each Sunday, we join with each other like Moses' companions and support each other, our ecclesia, through our prayers. But praying constantly also has its benefits in that it will change us over time if we keep at it.

Well, what will this change look like in us?

This is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He mentions that without love we are nothing. "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, nor pompous, nor inflated, nor rude, it does not seek its own interests, nor is it quick-tempered, nor brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all thing, hopes all things, endures all things."

This is what we will look like, simply people of love. If God is love then our goal is to become like God. If we do not become loving like God, then what are we becoming?

If this is how people describe us, then our prayer life is bearing fruit. That is why the gospel of prosperity will not make us like God, a God of prosperity. Our God has other attributes besides love, which even the Greek philosophers knew, which are goodness, truth, beauty and justice. It is interesting that they never mentioned love. They did know about love, since the Greeks have at least four words for love that are specific to how love is expressed, as in family love, and love between husband and wife, and love of God, etc.

It is agape love, or divine, that Jesus points us to, which is beyond just philia love which is love for our neighbor and friends. Agape love is a love we are willing to die for, which Jesus asked Peter after his resurrection, at the fire where he had just grilled their fish on the seashore. If we have agape love, we will certainly have the faith that keeps us praying always without becoming weary, since love never grows weary. It is that love a mother has who prays for her children when they are sick or in trouble.

I am sure my mom prayed with agape love each time her sons left home and headed out into the world. I am sure that it was agape love my mom prayed each time I headed to Africa for missionary work as a Marianist. It is agape love that I pray each day for my parishioners and that every one of you pray for each other here at Saint Francis de Sales parish.