

## Bible Study

### Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, cycle C

**Opening Prayer:** (Sign of the Cross) “Good and gracious God, we place ourselves in the awareness of your presence. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us through this time of reflection and prayer, so that we might come to know you more fully and to be more faithful disciples. We ask this through Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.”

#### Focusing Questions

1. What is your favorite way to pray?
2. For which issues are you most persistent in prayer and in physical effort?

#### Commentary before the First Reading: Exodus 17:8–13

The incident of which we are about to read occurred shortly after the Hebrew people left Egypt as a result of the Passover, on route to the Promised Land. Amalek (“**áh**-mah-lek”) was a powerful clan leader who posed a serious threat to the survival of the Chosen People as they crossed the Sinai Peninsula. It was only with the help of God that the Hebrews could have overpowered this new enemy.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. Who were Aaron and Hur? (see Exodus 4:1-15, Exodus 7:20, Exodus 24:14, Exodus 38:22)
2. Which seems to be the key element of Moses’ successful prayer: holding the staff of God, having faith, his perseverance, or the support of Aaron and Hur? Justify your answer.
3. Check out these other incidents during the Exodus when Moses used his walking staff to bring about God’s will. (Exodus 4:1-4, Exodus 7:20, Exodus 14:16, Exodus 17:5) What is a common element among them?
4. Since this reading does not intend to imply that God will destroy all of our enemies or answer any prayer *if* we pray long and hard enough, what might be the point of the reading?

#### Commentary before the Second Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

In this third of our 4 Sundays of reading from Saint Paul’s second letter to Saint Timothy, we hear Paul commenting on 2 kinds of perseverance. First he says that if we are to persevere in living according to the faith, we need the formation and support of Sacred Scripture to do so. He then tells Timothy to persevere also in performing the ministry of his office, especially the duties of preaching and teaching the truth.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:5; from whom had Timothy learned the basics of Christian faith?
2. According to this passage, what is the *primary* task of the Church and those who minister in it?
3. What does it mean that “all Scripture is inspired by God”? (How is that different from “written by God”?)
4. Give an example of how one might use Scripture to correct an error or to train someone in the spiritual life?
5. Some attempt to teach or correct by “twisting” the meaning of a passage of Scripture to suit the situation. How can a person know the accurate interpretation of a Scripture passage? Who can we rely on in order to avoid errors?

#### Commentary before the Gospel Reading: Luke 18:1-8

Here is another parable that is found only in the Gospel according to Saint Luke. Jesus was nearing the end of his journey to Jerusalem, where he would die. Time was running out and there was still so much his disciples needed to learn! One such lesson was this one about prayer: God will answer their prayers in a just manner, but sometimes they would have to wait with faith for the prayer to be answered.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. What is the point of Jesus’ story? (Note: it is unusual to be told the point before hearing the parable!)
2. On what basis was the judge in the parable accustomed to rendering his legal decisions?
3. If the widow symbolizes us and the judge symbolizes God, how is God like the dishonest judge?
4. And, how is God different from the judge when it comes to dealing with us?
5. Which theological virtue (*faith, hope or charity*) makes it possible to persevere in prayer for a long time?
6. Since Jesus obviously did not fear that, when the end of the world comes, there might not be even one person in the whole world with faith, what does the last sentence of this reading mean?

### **Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives**

1. Does God answer every prayerful petition that is lifted up to Him? How do you know that?
2. What makes it so hard to persevere in a prayer intention over a long period of time?
3. Are there any passages of Scripture that help you to be persistent in prayer?
4. What other aspects of our lives also benefit from persistence, from not giving up when things go badly or are especially difficult?
5. Share about a time when you prayed for something for an extended period of time, continuing even when you began to doubt that your prayer would be answered. Was the prayer eventually answered? If so, how?
6. Have you ever experienced the prayer support of others in a way that made a difference?
7. Is there something special for which you have been praying recently in which others might join you?

### **Closing Prayer**

*Offer spontaneous petitions for intentions that your heart has been holding in prayer. After each one, others present might respond: "Our help is in the name of the Lord."*

*Conclude by praying together: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." (Sign of the Cross)*