

Exodus 17:8-13

Psalm 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

Luke 18:1-8

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 16, 2022

REFLECTION

We are told that the unjust judge in this week's Gospel parable lacks respect for God and people. This means that he can't be reached by appeals to human or divine ideals of justice. In the end, he doesn't deliver a just decision because he has learned to care about justice; he does it to stop the widow's pestering!

In contrast, God is motivated by his own goodness and love for us. So why does the parable hold the widow up for us as an example of persistent prayer? If God knows perfectly what we need and want, why do we need to pray at all? Christ implicitly answers this question by making the connection between prayer and faith.

Persistent prayer is the evidence and fruit of faith. Faith helps us align ourselves to pray for God's will. When we keep our hearts on justice and persevere, we have faith that God honors our prayers, even when his answers are unclear or seem delayed.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Which title better suits this parable and why: "The Parable of the Unjust Judge" or "The Parable of the Persistent Widow"?
- ❖ Luke explains that the purpose of the parable is to encourage us to pray without tiring. Do you ever find prayer tiring?

ACTION

English parliamentarian William Wilberforce was inspired by his Christian faith to work to end the slave trade. Like the widow in the parable, he was both passionate for justice and persistent in seeking it, despite the apathy of his fellow lawmakers. You can follow his example by writing a letter to someone in authority in support of a social justice cause you are passionate about. Before you write, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire your words to do God's will. Afterwards, ask God to bless your efforts and use them to bring about justice.



Amazing Grace
(2006 film)



October 16, 2022

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #147C

Exodus 17:8-13

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2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

Luke 18:1-8

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Jesus presents a parable about an unjust judge who doesn't respect God or human beings. This judge is persuaded to give a just judgement because a widow will not stop pestering the judge, day and night. Of course persistence is key to a life of prayer, but Jesus is not comparing God to an unjust judge. Instead, the point that is made in the parable is that the unjust judge gives a just verdict, so surely God, who is loving and merciful, will be even more generous. Jesus wonders out loud if there is faith in God and his justice. We hope to answer Jesus with a resounding yes! That faith begins in our own hearts.

Q FOCUS: *Persistent prayer begins with a consistent prayer life.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week the Church celebrates the lives of Sts. Jean de Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues, and their companions (October 19). These men and their companions were martyred for spreading the faith in North America during the 1600s. Despite persecution and resistance to their mission, they persisted in sharing God's love and the Gospel. St. John Paul II is also remembered this week (October 22). He is a modern-day pope (he died in 2005, having served as pope since 1978) and is remembered for many things. He is beloved for his

inspiration to Catholic youth and beginning the initiative of World Youth Day.

Church Teaching Connection

"If we do no pray, we will not have the strength to go forward in life. Prayer is like the oxygen of life. Prayer draws down upon us the presence of the Holy Spirit who always leads us forward. . . . Jesus gave us the example of continual prayer, practice with *perseverance*. Constant dialogue with his Father, in silence and in recollection, was the fulcrum of his entire mission" (Pope Francis, General Audience, November 11, 2020).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 18:1-8

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this

widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.” The Lord said, “Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Have you ever heard a child asking their parent for something? It might start with something like, “Mommy, mommy, mommy, mommy, mommy!” You get the picture! Does the child get what they want? Sometimes they do. Sometimes they are so annoying that they can actually get their way.

► Has there been something that you have asked for continually? What were some of the ways that you persisted in asking?

► Did you receive what you were asking for? How did you feel when you did or did not receive it?

Jesus tells a parable of a wicked judge who still knows how to do the right thing, because of the persistence of the person asking. With this parable, Jesus reminds us of the importance of persisting in advocating for what we know is right and for persevering in prayer.

Throughout the Gospel accounts, we hear of Jesus' ongoing prayer life. Often we see Jesus stepping away from things and finding a quiet place for himself (for example, see Mark 1:35–39). He frequently goes to a mountain to pray (for example, see Mark 6:46 or Luke 9:28–36). He even taught his

disciples to pray, giving them, and us, the Our Father (Matthew 5:9–13).

► Do you have a favorite time and place to pray? If you don't, what are some qualities about the place and the time that would be best suited for your prayer?

Today's discussion of prayer is a good opportunity for you to choose a prayer time and place, try a new combination, or just recommit yourself to a daily prayer habit. Maybe the best place for you is in your room, when you first wake up. Maybe it is in the church before Mass begins. Perhaps you could create a prayer space with your family in your home. You could always go to mountaintops, like Jesus did, or find your own “mountaintop” location—somewhere in nature, away from others, where you feel close to God.

In all of this, the important thing is to build a life of persistent prayer. Prayer isn't just memorizing lines from a book. Prayer is having a conversation with God. But having a conversation isn't about you just talking.

► Have you ever had a conversation with someone and they would never let you talk? How did that feel?

► Does your prayer life look like that to God?

When conversations are one-sided, and the other person doesn't listen, it is not a very fruitful conversation. Those “conversations” don't foster relationship where you get to know the other person. Therefore, an important part of the life of prayer is silence. It is in silence that we can listen to the still small voice of God. It is in silence that we can just “be,” without the pressure to “do.”

► How often do you look at your phone? How much time do you spend on social media? How much “screen time” do you use each day?

One of the major obstacles to creating this prayer time in today's society is the immediacy of social media and the news. What we need to become closer to God is less screen time and more redeemed time.

For instance, what is the first thing that you do in the morning? The first thing we do every day can have a big impact on our outlook for the rest of the day. What if I told you that whatever you do first in

the morning is the thing that you worship? Spending time with God should be a priority, in prayer, in silence, in reflection, and in the sacraments. When we do that, we are on the right track.

Our God is not like the judge in the Gospel. Our God loves to answer us, to speak to our hearts, and to listen to our prayers. That is the faith that Jesus wonders if he will find on earth. A faith that trusts in God, and looks to him constantly for all things. It can begin today, with a simple commitment to prayer.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 42.

Unlike the unjust judge, God is generous and hears and answers our prayers.

Persistent prayer begins with consistent prayer, creating time and space for prayer in our lives.

Prayer is a relationship that we must choose to have with God.

Act on the Word

The Five Finger Prayer

For this activity, you will need printouts of what is referred to as the "Five Finger Prayer" by Pope Francis. Many graphics can be found online. Optional activity: paper and pens or colorful art supplies.

Pope Francis has taught us a simple way to pray using nothing but our hands. It can help us to build a consistent and persistent prayer life. This prayer practice is great for any age because it reminds of how easy it is to pray throughout our day. Even if the young people have heard of this prayer practice before, review it with everyone. Here is a recap of the prayer assignments for each finger. Online handouts about this prayer can be found and shared with the group.

- ✧ **The Thumb:** Pray for those closest to you; the thumb is the closest finger to you.
- ✧ **The Index Finger:** Pray for those who teach us; the index finger is often called the pointer finger.
- ✧ **The Middle Finger:** Pray for those who lead and are in positions of governance; the middle finger is the tallest finger.
- ✧ **The Ring Finger:** Pray for the sick and the weakest among us; the ring finger is the weakest finger.
- ✧ **The Pinky Finger:** Pray for yourself; the smallest finger reminds us that we put the needs of others before our own. It is not that our needs are unimportant, but rather, we should be oriented outwards, not inwards.

After reviewing the five finger prayer practice, hand out paper, pens, and art supplies. Encourage the young people to create an image or prayer list with their particular prayers for the week, based on the five categories of the five finger prayer. They might trace their hand, they could simply list things, or find a creative way to remind themselves of their prayers for the week. Provide an opportunity at the end for the young people to share their creations.

Closing Prayer

Lord God,
you listen to the cries of your people.
Grant that we may never waver
from seeking you.
May we be persistent in our prayer
and guide others to relationship with you.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.