

Read

Exodus 17:8-13

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

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

Luke 18:1-8

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 20, 2019



REFLECTION

Persistence is the name of the game in today's readings. *Persistence* is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary* as "firm or obstinate continuance in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition." We know that God will not always give us everything we want if it is not good for us, but we can trust that he will always give us what we want or something *better*. Of course, he also isn't likely to give us what we pray for if we pray for things that are morally wrong. It can be difficult sometimes to feel that God is hearing us when we do not see the changes or things we pray for. Two weeks ago we focused on faith in God. Faith in God's unconditional love should fuel our persistence.

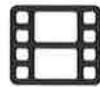
? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Have you built up habits of persistence in good things, or do you mostly persist in bad habits?
- ❖ If you were to succeed in one difficult thing that you want to do that requires persistence, how would you feel?

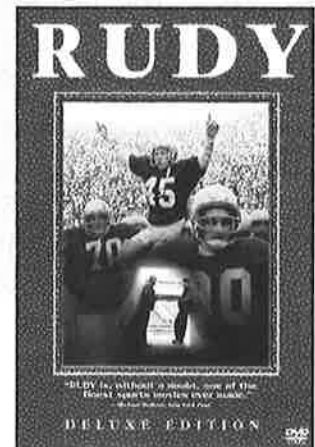


ACTION

What is something you know you should be persistent in that you have given up doing or pursuing? Talk to a friend and both of you share some area where you need to practice persistence. Then, together resolve to hold each other accountable. Don't pick something easy; pick the thing that you feel a squirm of guilt about. It won't be convenient, but that is the thing you most need to work on. While you carry out your resolution, pray every day for persistence in prayer and action. It will get hard, but both of you are guaranteed to be glad you persevered.



If you haven't seen it, watch *Rudy* which tells the story of an incredibly persistent young man who succeeded despite many challenges.





October 20, 2019

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #147C

Exodus 17:8-13

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

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

Today, we turn our attention to prayer. In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a parable about a widow who is heard by an unwilling judge because of her persistence. How much more will God hear the prayers of his chosen ones? Even when it seems that God is not listening or answering, we know in faith that God does hear our prayers.

Q FOCUS: *To be persistent in prayer.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Prayer is the foundation of our relationship with God, as is evident in the lives of the saints. This week includes the optional Memorial of St. John Paul II on October 22. There are many images of John Paul II at prayer, and his life attested to the importance and power of prayer. His reliance on the presence and protection of God was visible throughout his papacy.

Church Teaching Connection

Prayer is the lifeline between ourselves and God. When we are rooted in prayer, we see and understand our life circumstances through the indwelling presence and influence of the Holy Spirit. It is always possible to pray; it is a vital necessity to do so; prayer and the Christian life are inseparable (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2743-2745).

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:

- ▶ **What first comes to mind when you think about prayer?**
- ▶ **Do you think of Mass, of prayer here with this group, at home, as you go about your day?**

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a parable about persistence in prayer. Like all of Jesus' parables, there is an underlying message that is important for us. Today's parable includes two such messages.

First, the woman. She is persistent. She does not give up. She states her needs clearly and often, until she is heard.

- ▶ **How is your prayer sometimes like the woman? When you need something, do you turn to God, persistently naming your need?**

And second, the judge. He is not like God. In the parable, the judge is corrupt, and does not fear God or respect other people. Yet, even the corrupt judge hears the woman because of her persistence. Jesus then makes it clear. Surely if the unjust judge acted on the woman's persistent pleas, God will hear the prayers of his chosen ones.

The messages of today's parable are clear. We all have times in which it seems that God is either not hearing our prayers or is not answering them. And, God wants us to bring our needs to him in prayer. God does hear our cries. At times, it may

seem that God delays in responding, yet we know that God always hears and responds. Perhaps not in the time or the way that we would like.

- ▶ **What experience of prayer in your life is similar to the woman in today's parable? What happened?**

Like faith, prayer is a gift from God. It is our lifeline in relationship with God, in which we open our hearts and minds in humble attentiveness. Not only are we assured that God hears our prayers, the more we pray, the more we grow in union with God, so that we come to see the world and all of our lives through God's eyes, respond as God desires, and act as members of Christ's Body.

Our prayer takes many forms: we bless and adore God, recognizing God's greatness; we offer our petitions, as did the woman in the parable; we pray for others, intercessory prayer, in which we voice the needs of others in trust that God hears us; we praise and thank God for our many blessings. In each of these forms of prayer, we turn our hearts to God and turn our lives over to him in trust.

- ▶ **With what form of prayer are you most comfortable?**

The final verse of this Gospel passage poses a challenging and haunting question. "But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8). At the time this Gospel account was written, the Christian community was adjusting to their growing understanding that Jesus was not to return immediately in glory. Jesus' question seems directed to them, and yet it is a question for us as well.

- ▶ **If God seems to not hear our prayer, answers in a way we do not like, or seems to delay, do we lose faith?**

Prayer is not like a spiritual gum ball machine! We do not ask for something and expect that God will "spit it out" just as we have asked. Rather, in prayer, we turn our sights toward God, become attuned to God's will, and ask God to hear us and answer, as God wills, for the good of all.

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 50.

What is the greatest challenge for you in prayer?

What assures you that God hears our prayers?

How is prayer a gift and a response to the gift?

Act on the Word

Turn to God in Prayer

It will be helpful for this exercise to have copies of your parish hymnal, the Liturgy of the Hours, a sampling of devotional books, and copies of the Bible. It will be helpful to have adult leaders who are prepared to advise and help the groups. Have paper and pens on hand.

Divide into five groups. Assign each group one form of prayer: Blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, praise, and thanksgiving. If your group is small, combine praise and thanksgiving.

Instruct each group to create an experience of the form of prayer they have been assigned. They may draw on the richness of our tradition (for example, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament) and may be encouraged to adapt familiar forms of prayer such as the Liturgy of the Hours for the time available.

Remind the teens that prayer is both personal and communal. When we pray together, we each lift our hearts and minds to God, and yet, we pray together, attentive to the needs and prayers of all who are gathered.

When the groups have prepared their prayer, take a few moments to return and establish an atmosphere of quiet prayerfulness. Then, invite each group to lead the prayer experience they developed. Insure that the transition from one group to the next is accomplished prayerfully through the use of music or silence.

Spontaneous Prayer

Teens are sometimes uncomfortable praying spontaneously in public. Take time to invite your group to pray spontaneously, either as a large group or in smaller clusters. Begin by offering prayer yourself, and encourage each person to say something aloud.

Persistence in Prayer

Ask your group to quietly reflect on their needs as individuals, within their families, in their school, parish, city, country and world. Are there prayers they often bring to God? Does the parable of the widow encourage them to be persistent in this prayer? Invite them to share with a trusted friend, adult leader, or small group.

Closing Prayer

*Creator of heaven and earth,
you never cease to care for all you hold
in existence.*

Graciously hear the prayers of your people.

Sustain us in times of difficulty and help us

to always place our complete trust in 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.