



## October 17, 2010 The Twenty-ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time

*“Jesus told a parable on the necessity of praying always and not losing heart.” Luke 18:1*

Dear Friends;

Writer Walter Elliott penned, “Perseverance is not a long race, it is many short races one after the other.”

Today’s scriptures invite us to be persistent in our prayer. In the reading from the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus we see the people of God—Israel, threatened by a people called the Amalekites. They controlled the caravan routes between Egypt and Arabia. They saw these refugees from Egypt as a threat. They would remain a threat to the stability of Israel until centuries later were defeated by King David.

Prayer is not something that we would normally think of as a military strategy, when military leaders gather to discuss how to counter an enemy. Yet the author of Exodus presents us with just such a strategy. It is going to be the prayer of Moses, Joshua and the people of Israel which give them decisive victory.

This prayer is not presented to us as the private prayer of Moses. It is communal prayer—when Moses is no longer able to hold up his staff others assist him. It was not for himself that Moses holds up his arms but is for the whole people. And the people help to sustain his and their prayer.

Individually it may be difficult to sustain our efforts at prayer but not in community. St. Vincent de Paul the great 17<sup>th</sup> century advocate for the poor once said, “Our individual prayers are like a single straw which ignited burn out quickly, but our communal prayer is like a great bonfire that burns intensely bright lighting up the sky.” Prayer especially in communion with others is powerful.

The story of the widow in the Gospel is also a story of the triumph of community values over a selfish individual. In Jesus’ culture a woman could not speak for herself. If her husband died and she had no son she had no one to speak for her. In Hebrew the word for ‘widow’ also means ‘one who is unable to speak. The fact that this widow is showing up in court means she is in the worst of conditions.

Because of their inability to speak for themselves; and they were not included in the inheritance laws widows could be easily exploited and became a symbol of exploitation. Because of this The Prophets criticized their harsh treatment under the law and proclaimed that they were under the special protection of God.

Now in the parable the judge has no regard for God, law or justice. However he is moved to do something. The Greek suggests that the widow would end up giving him a figurative “black eye.” The only thing that could give him a “black eye” would be social pressure.

The widow is threatening to shame him. His reputation would be damaged because he let a poor widow get the better of him. He would not be able to live that down. The widow exhibits the kind of perseverance spoken of by Winston Churchill when faced with difficulty: “Never give in! Never give in! Never, Never, Never, Never, Never—in anything great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.” To that today’s Scriptures would add and don’t forget to ask for help in your praying.

Peace,

*Fr. Ron*

\*\*\*People have been asking what is going on with the front of the new building. We were getting it ready for the Fall Festival to make it usable. But we also hope to put in a lawn as we hope to continue improving and expanding our parish facilities. This can only happen because of the generous support of many people like you in our community. Thank you!