

29th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; Oct. 16th 2022
Exodus 17:8-13; 2Timothy 3:14-4:2; Luke 18:1-8

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

As we know, St. Monica is the role model for *‘perseverance’* and *‘persistence’* in prayer. She prayed for the conversion of her pagan husband, Patritius, for 30 years and finally he was converted to Christianity. But a year later he died. Meanwhile her oldest son Augustine was leading an immoral life and before he was converted to Christianity, Monica spent 17 years in prayer for his conversion. Unfortunately, she never had the chance to see him become a priest, let alone to be the bishop. For, she died a year after Augustine’s conversion. In today’s gospel, through the parable of the widow and the unjust judge, Jesus asks his disciples to pray always without becoming weary.

One of the features of Luke’s gospel is that we see a **praying Jesus** in it. For instance, only Luke says that at the baptism while **Jesus was praying** the Holy Spirit came down upon him (Luke 3:21). In Luke’s gospel we see Jesus withdrawing now and then from the crowd to **deserted places to pray** (Luke 5:16). Before Jesus chose the 12 as apostles, out of many, **he spent the night in prayer** (6:12). Luke says that Jesus was **praying in solitude** before he asked his disciples the questions, *“Who do the crowds say that I am? And “Who do you say that I am?”* (9:18 & 20). Before Jesus taught the prayer ‘Our Father’ Luke says, “He was **praying in a certain place**, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). Jesus prayed intensely in his most critical time, **which was in the Garden of Gethsemane** (Lk 22:39-46).

Uniquely in Luke Jesus told two parables showing the importance of perseverance in prayer (Luke 11:5-13 and 18:1-8). The first parable is the story of a friend who goes to his friend in the middle of the night asking for three loaves of bread which was denied initially. The parable explains how the persistence of the friend finally paid off. In today’s gospel we have just listened to the second parable with the similar nature. Here a widow goes to an unjust judge begging for justice to which he didn’t give any attention. Remember, in Palestine the widows were totally neglected by all and even they were denied of justice. But her persistence moved the stony heart of the judge and he did justice to her. **Both the parables carry the same message that we should not give up our prayers just because God is apparently slow in answering our prayers.** Of course, God is not like the unjust judge; He is a compassionate Father who is concerned about the

needs of His children. Monica's experience remains a model for the people who get frustrated over the silence of God.

These days the common complaint we hear from people is that they are too busy to find some time to pray. To such people **St. Francis De Sales** says, **“Everyone has to pray at least half hour daily; but if you are too busy, then pray one hour.”** Mother Therese was the greatest and busiest humanitarian worker the world has ever seen. She spent hours daily with the destitute, nursing them and caring for them. Her day started at 4.30 a.m. with the prayer and meditation followed by the Holy Sacrifice of Mass. Coming back home in the evening, though very weary, she and her sisters spent time in Eucharistic Adoration.

It is said that 75% of people in our country don't belong to a particular religion and God does not have much to do with their lives. The 25% of people who are practicing their faith would like to remain with God and spend time in prayer. But they too complain that they cannot concentrate in their prayer due to various distractions; many even lose their faith in prayer for lack of response from God. It is absolutely true that we are not perfect in our prayer life. As we live in the busy world when we go to pray many things will be running in our heads. We cannot empty the whole world and reach in the presence of the Lord. On the other hand, if we know how to pray, and what makes a real prayer, then it is lot easier for us to pray. We should not forget that the real prayer is nothing but our conversation with God, as a friend to a friend. We never approach a friend just only to ask for a favor; rather we enjoy his/her company. Sometimes a friend may not be able to solve our problems; but we go to him/her knowing that there is somebody who can listen to us sympathetically. Once we consider God as our friend, there is no restriction in what we talk or share with Him or even what we ask for. **When we share our problems with God, we are not trying to persuade God to change His mind according to our need; rather we are asking Him to do what is good for us.** *If we believe strongly that God will do only what is good for us, we should be content with the way God responds to our petitions.* Our prayers should not be restricted only in asking for a favor; in our prayer we need to thank and glorify Him as well; we also should offer Him all our problems and feelings as well. Sometimes, in prayer what we have is only our distraction to offer Him; other times what we have will be our frustrations, physical ailments and tears to give Him. They are all good prayers before the Lord. Even if our prayers are not answered immediately; like St. Monica, we should not give up; rather go on asking and asking.