

4-6-2022

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 16 October 2022

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Recommended Citation

Doran, Tony. "29th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 16 October 2022." *Pastoral Liturgy* 52, no. 3 (2021): 1-6.
<https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol52/iss3/26>

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16 October 2022

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Tony Doran

Introduction

“Keep on keeping on” is an oft-quoted saying highlighting the need for perseverance in a particular course of action, especially in the face of adversity. This theme comes through in today’s readings very clearly. We can take it to mean being constant in our prayer. Or, like the widow in the Gospel, we can be known for our perseverance and tireless effort in bringing the Kingdom to birth.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you judge the living and the dead.
Lord, have mercy.

You are the Word of God.
Christ, have mercy.

You call us to faith in you.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

The oration

Almighty ever-living God
grant that we may always conform our will to yours
and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart.

Our prayer would have been familiar to Roman worshippers attending Masses in the season of Easter in the late sixth and early seventh century.

The collect consists of a pair of interconnected petitions. In the oration we request both that we may always have a will that is devoted to God and that we may always worship and serve the Divine One with a sincere heart. Our worship and service is truly sincere when aligned with a will that is wholly devoted to God. On the other hand, a will devoted to God finds expression in service and worship with a sincere heart. This is the proper attitude in face of the power, eternity and majesty of God. The conjunction of ‘will’ and ‘heart’ envisions the complete person; will, heart, soul,

mind and body. Nor can it be forgotten that this devotion and sincerity are themselves first gifts from God. (Gerard Moore)

First Reading

Exodus 17:8-13

This short reading about the intercession of Moses for the people in their struggle against the Amalekites is a reminder about the need for persistence and perseverance in our prayer.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 120. R. cf. v. 2

Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

This psalm is one of the 'Psalms of Ascent', recited by pilgrims as they approached the holy city of Jerusalem. This psalm is a prayer to God of trust and confidence of an individual as they approach the holy city: God who guards our coming and going never stops caring for us.

Second Reading

2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:2

A further admonition to Timothy to be faithful to the words of Scripture and to be persistent in proclaiming the Good News contained in these words in season and out of season.

Gospel Reading

Luke 18:1-8

The parable of the persistent widow has traditionally been interpreted as highlighting the need for persistent and constant prayer in the life of the disciple. Contemporary interpreters see the widow as a figure of Christ who tirelessly combats evil and injustice on behalf of the poor and neglected. Either way, there is a challenge for us who hear this parable today.

Reflection

In today's First Reading, we have a dramatic example of an endurance test. After their freedom from bondage in Egypt, the Israelites are having a tough time dealing with the wilderness and fighting off attacks from nomadic tribesman. Moses sends Joshua off to engage the enemy and goes to the top of the hill to pray. As long as he

keeps his arms raised, the Israelites do well; but when his arms fall, his army seems to follow suit. Even if his companions cheat a little by propping him up, Moses stays with his prayer until the enemy is defeated. The perseverance of Moses spells the first military victory for Israel.

In the Gospel the victory is less dramatic, but the widow's perseverance wins the day. According to the tradition of Israel, a judge was expected to be impartial except to three groups of people – the widow, the orphan and the stranger. Because these people lived in the absence of familiar love and support; they were vulnerable in a society where influence and money talked the loudest. A judge was expected to be partial to them and to champion their cause to ensure their rights. The religious law stated: 'If you ill-treat them in any way and they make any appeal to me for help, I shall certainly hear their appeal' (Exodus 20:22).

When we meet the judge and the widow in the parable we meet them at a crisis point, when both of them are maimed. We have no case history for the widow but we do for the judge. He is a man who is influenced neither by religious principle nor by public opinion. Both justice and compassion are absent from his dealings with the widow. She has no influential friends to bring pressure on the judge and she has no money to bribe him: all she has is the justice of her cause and her own persistence.

The justice of her cause, however, is clearly not enough. She has nerve and she exercises it relentlessly on the judge. He refuses her for a long time but she refuses for even longer to take him seriously! It becomes a war of nerves and eventually it is the judge's nerves which give in: he grants the widow justice for the sake of his own health. She puts him on the sick list and he can imagine himself being worried to death. In fact, the widow does the judge an enormous favour: she exhausts him into justice. Her persistence pays off in the end.

In telling this parable, Jesus is not comparing God to the unjust judge and Jesus is not suggesting that God only answers our prayers to avoid being bothered further. Rather, Jesus contrasts God with the judge arguing that if an unjust man can come to justice eventually, how much more will God answer his chosen ones even when he delays to help them. Strange expression that. Usually we would say "rush to help". But God has his own time and his delay in judgement can give people more time to repent.

Jesus encourages us to be persistent in our prayer and never lose heart. In an age where we have become accustomed to instant results, we are impatient with what appears to be endless delays. But the values we cherish are not instantly available: values like peace and justice take time to establish. The danger is that we give up too soon, when we do not get an immediate result. We have to be persistent. We have to invest our time in our beliefs. Like the widow in today's Gospel, we must still search for justice until the unjust of this world are worried to death.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The psalmist today declares that our help is from the Lord who made heaven and earth. Therefore, let us bring our prayers to the Lord, whom we trust will hear and heed our needs.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church, clergy, lay and religious. May they, through the power of the Spirit, remain missionary in intent and action. May they guide us through our Plenary Council and the Synod in 2023, upholding peace and unity and the will of the Spirit.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of Australia in all levels of government. May they strive to make decisions that are always wise and just.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our parish community, that we may be sensitive to the needs of those around us, always striving to lighten their burdens.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for ourselves, that in our prayer we will understand that the justice of God is beyond our understanding and that all will be answered according to divine will.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who seek justice through our courts. May they humbly persist in their efforts so that justice will eventually be given to their right cause.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are suffering and feel that they cannot pray. May our prayers lift them so that they find courage and endurance in their pain.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God of justice, we offer these prayers with the full understanding that you are beyond all human ability and in the knowledge that our needs will be answered. We ask this through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOVK	AOVNG	GA	CWB	CWBII	S&S1
A child's prayer		111					
Alleluia! sing to Jesus	191			371	619	449	
Blest be the Lord	179			458			
Blest be the God of Israel						187a-c	
Canticle of Zachary				5			
Canticle of Zechariah					637		
Christ be beside me					638	463	
For the beauty of the earth	123			427	678	487	
For the healing of the nations				513			
God gives his people strength					691		
God's blessing sends us forth					694		
O God, our help in ages past	175			459	767	568	
Our help is from the Lord			105				
Praise to the holiest in the height				410	791	585	
Seek, O seek the Lord				211	802	595	
Seek ye first	48			456		594	160
There is a longing in our hearts, O Lord						82	
There's a wideness in God's mercy					838	624	
There's a Spirit in the air						623	
Though the mountains may fall	182			453			

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 120: *Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

	CWB	JOBC	LPC
Psalm 120	435	pg. 100	pg. 162