

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 21, 2007

Ex. 17:8-13; Ps. 121:1-8; 2 Tim. 3:14-4:2; Lk. 18:1-8

Homilist: *S. Noreen Coleman, O.P.*

Persistent prayer really "works"! Sometimes the asking continues for a long period of time. Witness St. Monica who prayed earnestly for seventeen years before her son Augustine gave up his dissolute living and converted to Christianity. Sometimes one is tempted to play a little game with God. Witness Abraham who kept trying, ever so cleverly, to twist God's arm until God agreed to save Sodom and Gomorrah from destruction. Little did Abraham know that this was God's plan all along. (Gen. 18:17ff)

Closer to home, we are aware of our school principals praying for the most qualified person to fill a particular role in the school's faith community. When at last that person surfaces, there is great rejoicing, with gratitude to a gracious God. Cynthia, an inmate, experienced great peace when after ten years of prayer she was granted the grace to forgive. How many times does each of us pray for something important to us and, bingo, the answer finally comes in a way more wonderful than we would have dared to imagine.

In today's Gospel we hear proclaimed the parable of the persistent widow and the unjust judge. A widow in Jesus' day had no rights. Without a husband to speak for her, she was considered the weakest member of society, penniless, defenseless. Yet here comes this brave woman standing before this merciless judge, demanding her just desserts. We see the judge, frustrated, exhausted from her constant pleading. Finally, afraid of her making a public scene and exposing his crookedness, he gives in and agrees to give her a hearing.

We know that Jesus' point is not to compare the actions of this unjust judge to His, and our, heavenly Father's way of answering our prayer. Rather, we might suspect he is telling us that this woman had such deep trust and faith she knew God could "move mountains" for her and bring about the justice she so earnestly desired. Let's recall once again the faith-filled witness of Monica, of Abraham, of our colleagues in ministry--and of the countless people who touch our lives daily. Let's continue to imitate their example of persevering prayer, founded in a deep trust that God will always come through for us.

When Jesus tells us to "pray always," (v.1), isn't he saying that our whole life is to be one of prayer, intimately united with our Emmanuel, our "God with us"? This compassionate God knows our every need and intends to answer even before we ask or even if we never ask. In Chapter 21 of Luke (v. 36) Jesus admonishes us to "stay awake"; that is, at all times be attentive to my loving presence. With faith and trust, "never lose heart" (JB 18:1) until finally the light dawns and you see clearly the treasures that lay in store for you for all eternity.

"When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (v. 8) If we truly welcome God's presence and action in our lives at every moment, Jesus will find faith on earth!