

Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 19, 2025

Prayer is one of the great mysteries of spiritual life. Sometimes we may think of prayer as very straightforward: I say these words, I kneel down or I go to my place of prayer in my home, or I read the Scriptures. There is always something mysterious also about prayer and especially about the effectiveness of prayer. And there is something in us I think that wants to know how to pray effectively. We want to know that our prayer is doing something. We want to know that our prayer is worthwhile, that we are not just speaking into a void. We are not being unheard. Yet in our experience we find that not every prayer is answered the way we want, or we hope. And sometimes we wonder if our prayers are heard at all. I think I mentioned last Sunday that some of the passages in the Scriptures might lead us to believe that if we just did it 'right', that our prayers would always be answered the way we want or we would get what we are asking for. We would obtain what we called for but that's not really what prayer is all about.

The Scriptures are not presented to us as some sort of secret code, that if we crack it, then we open the vaults of Heaven and get every answer we want. There isn't a key that opens up this treasure chest where God is somehow withholding from us the things that we want. No. But again in today's Gospel, we might tend toward this kind of interpretation. We might think, 'Ah, perseverance is the secret.' Perseverance is the key. So, if I just keep asking, I will wear God down and He will, in the end, give me what I want." But this is a rare condition where one of the Gospel writers explicitly states why Jesus tells the Parable. He says: *"It is a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary."* That doesn't say anything about 'this being the secret to obtaining what we are asking for.'

It is a Parable about the necessity of perseverance, and I will expand it from the necessity of praying always to the necessity for always just persevering in our faith because in a sense, our whole life of faith is a prayer in which we are asking God for Heaven. In our thoughts and words and deeds we should be expressing our desire for eternal life. We are crying to God "I want heaven." Jesus says, *"It's necessary for us to persevere in this to pray always, without becoming weary."* And so, as we hear the words of this Gospel, instead of turning our attention to the judge and trying to break the judge down and trying to get a response from the judge, we turn current attention instead to the widow who represents all of us. And asks the question, how long will we persevere? And are there any conditions to our perseverance? Jesus asks at the end of the Parable: *"But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"* Will he find faith? Will He find that His disciples got persevered in living the Christian life?

It doesn't take long to recognize that there are many, many challenges to be overcome by perseverance. There are many things that could be obstacles, things that would stand in the way of our persevering until death in living our Catholic faith. Some find it simply difficult to maintain right belief. To actually believe what is taught in the Gospels and taught by the Church. Perhaps evidence of this is the fact that there are thousands and thousands and thousands of different denominations of Christians. But some may struggle to persevere in holding right belief. For example, the Church's teaching that God is good and only good and loving and confident. People who are struck by terrible tragedies may have some trouble persevering in that belief that God is good and that God hears prayers.

Some have difficulty persevering in right worship. We all know people who used to gather here with us for Mass who are not here who are still living and still living in the area. And people who are not here have their reasons. I mean thousands of reasons for not persevering in worship. Sometimes it is just a busyness. People are so busy, their schedules are so full if it is have for them to carve out time to come to Mass. Or they have been hurt by someone in the Church and do not want to come here. There might be all kinds of different reasons.

What about persevering in right actions? The struggle with sin is a reality. It is hard to persevere. Sometimes people get very discouraged, even to the point of despair over their own weakness, their own sinfulness, and that makes it very difficult to persevere. Sometimes people face persecution or ridicule or opposition because of their faith. They suffer rejection. It is hard to persevere in the face of that. Sometimes it is just the dynamics of being in the Church, struggling with the decisions that are made, the way things are handled. One of the priests of the Diocese was telling me the other day that some time ago, he had to schedule the Confirmation Mass at noon, which was not the normal time that their parish had Mass. And some were so upset; they never came back. People have their limits. Some are lower than others, I guess. Or people are turned away by the scandal. Scandals that have rocked the Church. Behaviors of those in leadership in the Church. It goes on and on. I mean, I can stand here a long time and talk about different things that test our perseverance.

But the question is, will we persevere? And perseverance doesn't always look like starting something and then continuing until it's completion. Sometimes we do weary and it doesn't mean we can't pick right back up again and keep on persevering. And the fact that

there are folks we know that aren't here today and probably haven't been here in a long time is no cause for discouragement or despair – it is not a condemnation on any of them. We trust in the goodness of God, and that God is working in their life too, in their own journey in this world, this life.

But there's still need for perseverance. Are we able to say, truthfully, there is **nothing** that would cause me to abandon my practice of my faith. No scandal, no offense from another person, no disagreement with a decision. There is nothing that would shake me from the practice of my faith. When the Son of Man comes will He find that we have persevered? It may seem like I'm preaching to the choir, well, I am preaching to the choir [laughter], but everyone else here, too.

We all struggle in some way to persevere. We all face challenges to our perseverance in faith. So, we are not here patting ourselves on the back, saying, 'we are the ones persevering.' Jesus is reminding us of how important it is to press on, to remain faithful. It is an opportunity for us to recognize, to reflect on our struggles and challenges in this disregard. Whether it is a struggle with sin or a struggle with people in this church, or the structure of the Church of a belief, or whatever it is, the struggle in our vocation, the struggle with discouragement.

What is it that tempts us to walk away? It is a great opportunity for us to renew our resolve and that resolve is not that we say, "I am going to do it. I can do it!" We have to turn to the God with our whole heart to receive the grace to remain faithful all our days.