

Homily of Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2022

Exodus 17:8-13; Psalm 121:1-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2; Luke 18:1-8

The first reading tells us about the mission before Israel. The mission was to defeat Amalek in order to continue their journey to the Promised Land. We can see the division of labor for the mission. Joshua and the soldiers went to the warfront for the physical battle. Moses and two men climbed to the top of the hill for the spiritual battle. "As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight. Moses' hands, however, grew tired; so they took a rock and put it under him and he sat on it. Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, so that his hands remained steady until sunset" when Joshua and the Israelites defeated the Amalekites (Exodus 17:11-12). This event speaks of the power of prayer; and the importance of persistent and enduring prayer. It speaks also of the importance of spiritual warfare to accompany all our material engagements.

St. Augustine puts it this way, "Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you." Someone says, "Work hard, but pray harder." We are encouraged to pray even harder when it appears our prayer has not been granted. Jesus sets an example for us in Luke 22:44, "And in his anguish, he prayed more earnestly..."

Jesus gave a parable in today's gospel to teach us the importance of persistent and enduring prayer. The widow never gave up appealing to the dishonest judge until she received justice. Jesus assures us, "Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily" (Luke 18:7).

Jesus gives a similar parable in Luke 11:5-8, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence." The acronym: "P-U-S-H" is well exemplified in the three instances above: Pray, Until Something Happens!

What is the "Amalek" in your way to your "Promised Land?" Do not be discouraged. Do not give up. Like Moses, "climb to the top of the hill" and keep your "hands raised up" in spiritual battle until the "Amalek" is conquered. Amen.

Billy Graham says, "A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian;" in the same manner, St. Jerome says, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us the importance of the sacred Scriptures in everything we do. St. Paul says that it is capable of giving wisdom. "It is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness." St. Paul advises us to be competent in it and equip ourselves with it. He continues, "Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching." This is to say, witness the Word you read; and be hearers and doers of the Word.

Finally, the sacred Scriptures is a powerful tool for prayer. It is God's language. Communication between us and God is very effective when we speak his language to him. Therefore, pick up your Bible and empower yourself with it!

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP