

Homily of Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

Sunday, October 20, 2019 is World Mission Sunday. Pope Pius XI instituted World Mission Sunday in 1926 to be an annual day of prayers and expression of support for the Catholic Church missionary vision and character. In his message for World Mission Sunday 2019, Pope Francis re-emphasizes that while the Church is on mission in the world, the missionary mandate of the Church touches each of us personally. The pope states, "I am a mission, always; you are a mission, always; every baptized man and woman is a mission... Each of us is a mission to the world, for each of us is the fruit of God's love." He continues, "Today's rampant secularism, when it becomes an aggressive cultural rejection of God's active fatherhood in our history... the Church needs men and women who, by virtue of their baptism, respond generously to the call to leave behind home, family, country, language and local Church, and to be sent forth to the nations, to a world not yet transformed by the sacraments of Jesus Christ and his holy Church... No one ought to remain closed in self-absorption, in the self-referentiality of his or her own ethnic and religious affiliation." Some go to the missions by going; some go to the missions by praying; and some go to the missions by giving. Through these expressions, we all possess the missionary vision and character of the Church.

The Chosen People of God's mission when they left Egypt was to reach the Promised Land. It was a mission with many challenges and difficulties on the way. The first difficulty was the crossing of the Red Sea. Moses, a great man of prayer, cried to God in prayer. God commanded him, "You will raise your staff and stretch your hand over the sea and divide it to let the Israelites go dryfoot through the sea." Moses did as he was commanded, "The waters divided and the Israelites went on dry ground through the middle of the sea, with the waters forming a wall to their right and left" (Exodus 14:15-23).

After crossing the Red Sea the Israelites continued their journey to the Promised Land. They were to pass through a place called Amalek. The Amalekites were hostile to the Israelites and waged war against them. While the Israelites fought the physical battle with the Amalekites, Moses, a great man of prayer, went to the top of the hill with the staff of God in his hand accompanied by Aaron and Hur to fight the spiritual battle. The first reading states, "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. The events narrated above 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 physical engagements.

Like the Israelites, we will come across 'Red Seas' and 'Amalekites' on our missions. But like Moses, we are to go to God in prayer with the staff of God. The staff of God is the Eucharistic Celebration, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Bible, the Rosary, the prayer books, and so on. Someone says, "Work hard, but pray harder." St. Augustine puts it this way, "Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you." Pray as though everything depended on God (spiritual warfare). Work as though everything depended on you (physical warfare).

Jesus gave a parable in the 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."

Jesus gave 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."

Sometimes we are discouraged after enduring and persistent prayers and God does not grant our prayers the way we have asked. The readings of today encourage us never to give up but to pray until something happens. However, as people of faith when we see God's hand in an 'unanswered prayer', that becomes prayer answered. It means, also, that we accept the words of Jesus in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done." Dante Alighier declares in *The Divine Comedy* "In his will is our peace." God's will, therefore, is mission accomplished.

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