

Twenty-Nine Sunday in Ordinary Time -C 2019
Ex. 17.8-13//2 Tim. 3.14-4.2//Luke 18.1-8

→there once was a nun returning from her ministry at a nursing home....and she ran out of gas.

→a passing motorist saw her and stopped to ask if there was anything he could do to help

→“I am out of gas,” said the nun and the man answered.... “well you can have some of mine, but I don’t have anything to siphon it into.”

→now the nun, being a bit resourceful opened the trunk to her car and removed a bedpan from it, closed the trunk and handed it to the gentleman.”

→he in turn, filled it with gas, siphoning the gas from his own tank.....

→he handed it to the nun and got in his car and drove off

→the nun took the full bedpan, unscrewed the lid to her gas tank, and began to pour the gas into the car

→and as she poured the gas ever so carefully....and feeling a bit awkward she raised her eyes to heaven in a very prayerful way

→at that moment, another driver passed by and seeing her...turned to his companion and said.... “boy that nun must really believe in the power of prayer!”

→the power of prayer...is something many of us carry with us on the journey of life....it is something that many of us believe and trust in.....*yet*.....

→”have you ever wondered...if God really listens to our prayers?

→“are some prayers better than others....does God respond to some while ignoring others?”... [PAUSE]

→[likewise]....when we pray...are we simply multiplying our words over and over trying to coerce God to see things our way or do we really mean what we say?"

→....“how long should we pray for something.....[and] when is it time to throw in the proverbial towel...to face the reality that we aren't [so it may seem] going to receive what we are praying for?....

→I am sure we have all wondered at some time or another...if God is even listening to us....PAUSE

→we pray a lot by ourselves when it's just God and us....we pray as couples...we pray as families...we pray when we gather as a community here each Sunday

→we form our prayers and we bring forth our petitions to God....but often nothing seems to change...conditions [all around us] don't improve and sometimes, it seems, as if they even get worse

→[and] we all know about unanswered prayers....the husband who prays for an easing of his wife's Parkinson disease...the woman who prays for the remission of her sister's breast cancer...the parents who pray for a cure of their daughter's leukemia...friends who pray for the recovery of their friend's alcoholism....and as a parish community...we pray for peace, an end to terrorism, an end to anger and hate and violence in our neighborhoods, our schools and our homes...and the list goes on and on and on

→we pray here today, we will pray tomorrow and we will continue praying for years to come...for all these intentions...and God may grant some...but not all of them will receive the answer we hope desperately for

→and yet persistence, perseverance.....the human spirit.....prayer remains ever strong in each one of us.....PAUSE

→the gospel today is a very unsettling story about prayer...and it seems to suggest that there is a relationship between perseverance and getting what we want in prayer

→the story that Jesus tells brings two very different characters together...a hardened and unscrupulous judge and a defenseless widow who typifies the most vulnerable and the most helpless in society...AND the only thing she has going for her is perseverance...the only weapon she has against the corrupt judge is her persistence...she wants her due and she is not going to give up until she gets it...PAUSE

→human persistence, the quality of persevering.....can be very effective in accomplishing any goal that we might have or set out for in our lives.

→[and so I believe.....the lesson is quite evident and simple for us today]

→we need each other's presence and support....we need perseverance ---we need persistence —the human spirit—to be a very real part of our lives for our faith to grow and become strong

PAUSE

→we have all witnessed the strength of human persistence, perseverance, the triumph of the human spirit....

→it is this same kind of persistence, this same kind of perseverance that is needed on our part to bring about the kingdom of God here on earth....and that is what our prayer

[our prayer life] needs to be about...our prayer in our stillness of our rooms at night...and in our gathering here each week... PAUSE

→it would be very easy to conclude that this gospel is about the judge....but in reality

→this gospel is really about the widow.... “look at her” Jesus says.... “if you want to know how to pray...look at her!”

→[and] his point is that ////there are just not enough persistent people in the world today....i.o.w.....the point that Jesus is making is that sometimes as people we give up too easily.....we don’t endure, or continue, or stay true to our commitments, our responsibilities, our obligations

→and today....Jesus makes a very bold statement about our faith...how it might be deficient when it comes to trusting and hope...///...that we are prone to give up far too easily...

→and yet in this gospel reading today....Jesus says to you and me...that if we are serious about being his disciples...that if we are truly serious about having a relationship with God...if we are serious about making the most of the life we have been given.....we can’t give up so easily....and we can never stop praying in our lives.

PAUSE

→there is not one of us...in this church...who hasn’t at one time or another asked “how much longer God”...how much longer must I keep on praying?”

→and Jesus himself realized....all too well...what it meant to grow weary in prayer....what it meant to lose heart....recall how disappointed he was in the disciples who slept while he prayed in the garden and who ran away as he hung on the cross

→for reasons that are known only to God...answers to our prayers may sometimes be slow in coming...and while God may know better than anyone else what we need and when we need it...we still need to be persistent...and persevere in our prayer

PAUSE

→[you see]...prayer is not about just reciting all of our petitions and attempting to manipulate God so that He answers them

→its not about saying...“I’ll keep praying God...I’ll hang in there if you just answer this particular prayer for me”

→the real impact of prayer is not on God...it’s on us....

And as we hear today...Jesus tells us to never stop praying...to never give up on God...because [you see] no matter what happens...God will never give up on us