29TH SUNDAY - ORDINARY TIME C
OUR HELP COMES FROM THE LORD, WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH

The Psalmist cries out, "I lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall come my help?" And he answers, "My help shall come from the Lord who made heaven and earth". This God never dozes nor sleeps. He is always awake. He protects from fire and water, so that the one who seeks Him will not drown or be burnt.

How can I reach Him for help? The readings offer us some answers; it involves perseverance in prayer, the word of God, and support from fellow Christians, backed by my faith in God.

The first reading gives us what the Israelites did to defeat their enemy; they applied both physical and spiritual means. Joshua and the army went to fight while Moses, supported by Aaron and Hur, asked God for strength. As we heard, when Moses was tired of raising his hands in prayer the Amelekites had the upper hand. So it was not by the might of the soldiers but by the power of God that they fought. That is what God once told Zerubbabel, "Not by might and not by power, but by my Spirit, that this mountain shall be moved", Zech. 4:6b-7. Through perseverance in prayer, the Israelites won the battle.

The widow in the Gospel also persevered in her seeking of justice and she finally got what she wanted. The beginning of the passage teaches that we ought always to pray and not lose heart. But what will propel us to pray persistently is the faith we have in God, and that will enable us get what we are asking for.

Many of us are not praying or persevering in prayer because we don't know what God has done in the lives of many people who prayed when they found themselves in hopeless situations and they were rescued or saved by God's intervention. Do we remember that the prayers of Esther (4), Judith, (9:1-14) Sarah (who became the wife of Tobias) (Tobit 8:1-8), changed hopeless situations? Do we remember that Daniel was saved from the lion's den, (Dan 6), and the three companions, Ananias, Azarias, and Mizael (Dan 3:8-23), were not burnt in the fire? Do you remember how Peter and Paul and Silas were released from prison? (Acts 12:1-11;16:25-27). Have we found ourselves or do we find ourselves in similar situations? If yes, what do we do? Do we cling to Jesus or resort to relying on our own

wisdom and strength? If we do not know what to do then it is good to go to the Scriptures to learn from many people who knocked, sought, and asked with faith and how the door of grace was opened to them, like the widow.

As St. Paul says, Scripture is useful in many ways. It teaches us about God, corrects our errors, instructs us in right living, and reproves us for our sins. Thus it keeps us close to the Lord. I always use two things to describe it; GPS and sign posts. These can direct you to your destination and this is what the Scriptures do.

Another lesson we can learn from the first reading is community support. Moses, Aaron, Hur, Joshua and the army all played their part to win the battle. We can see this also during the period of the Apostles (Acts 4:23-31), when they were being persecuted. They prayed together and supported themselves
with what they had.

When we come to Mass we support one another in prayer; I pray for you and you pray for me. Even if I cannot pray, I know the one sitting by me is praying for me. The presence of others encourages me to pray, and I can feel the sense of belongingness. I learn from the Scriptures and I learn from others.

How am I equipping myself for every good work? Am I praying constantly, or is it when I feel like praying that I pray? Do I easily give up when my prayer is not answered quickly or feel not answered? What makes it hard for me to pray? Moses was tired; the woman was dismissed by the judge; what is my obstacle? Is it from within or without? What influence does the Scripture have on my daily life?

It is good to have faith in God, persist in prayer, be guided by the Scripture, and the Lord will guard you from evil; He will guard your soul. The Lord will guard your going and coming, both now and forever.