

29th Sunday Ordinary Time Year "C" *Growing weary for the Lord.*
October 19-20, 2013/ 7:00 pm, 9:00a (SVdP), 12 Noon, 5:00 pm
Readings: Exodus 17:8-13; 2 Tim. 3:14-4:2; Luke 18:1-8

The 17th chapter of Exodus opens with the grumbling of the followers of Moses, who were thirsty and God provided for them eventually. They had put God to the test by complaining to Moses who in turn prayed for flowing help. The second half of this chapter is a win-lose proposition. The Amorites, ancient enemies of Israel under the leadership of Amalek, came to wage war against God's people. We hear Moses giving Joshua a battle plan.

We then witness the amazing image of Moses raising his arms in a gesture of prayer, immediately calling to our minds those of Jesus on the Cross—arms spread wide and nailed to the Cross, with which the Redeemer has won the decisive victory over the enemy. For Moses, it was a gesture of prayer, but when he relaxed for even a moment, the enemies gained the upper hand. How weary must he have become from bearing the weight all by himself? So he was sent helpers in the persons of his brother Aaron and a man named Hur, who according to Jewish tradition married Moses' sister Miriam.

Many Christians would desire such an attitude of complete resignation and dependence upon the mercy and grace of God. This only comes through faith. It is very difficult for many people, including today's homilist to do that. We become concerned about many things, we worry about our loved ones, about our jobs, our duties. Yet, there is only so much that we can do. We begin to grow weary and discouraged.

There is a story told about Blessed John XXIII:
"Lord, It has been a long day and I am tired. I have not done everything I wanted to do today, but I am going to bed because after all. . . it is your Church."

As a pastor, I am keenly aware of the tremendous sacrifices made by our people in living their good and faith-filled Christian lives. I see the joy that your families bring to you, as you pray together, as you support them in their many and varied activities. I see loving couples married many years faithfully coming to Church together, just as I see widows and widowers, now alone, who continue to move forward in their lives, fulfilling their vocations of holiness, even as the pain of loss remains strong.

Yet, the fact is we can all grow weary. I have discovered that there are two kinds of fatigue. One is *bodily* and the other is *spiritual*. They are not unrelated to one another, and often in fact go hand in hand. There is tremendous spiritual weariness right now in our local Church, as we all know. We feel like Moses, crying out that we cannot bear the fatigue any longer. Who will reach out to help us?

But if we have spent ourselves for good and for the sake of others, then we can *turn out the light* at night with a clear conscience, and know that we are right with God. It does not make the days easy, for the next one too may be long, difficult and filled with challenges, scandals and difficulties. However, we when we know that we are spending ourselves for good, we discover that God gives us the grace we need to persevere. Just when we think we have had it, He sends someone to lift up our weary arms, so that we do not have to bear the load all by ourselves.

Thus, our faith teaches that our prayers must be raised untiringly to God. This is a great test of faith, but the alternative cannot and will not bring us happiness. When we stop praying, we will surely falter. We must guard against this temptation with all our might.

As Pope Benedict XVI said in 2007 during his pastoral visit to Naples:

Faith assures us that God hears our prayers and grants them at the appropriate moment, although our daily experience seems to deny this certainty. In fact, in the face of certain events in the news or of life's numerous daily hardships which the press does not even mention, the supplication of the ancient Prophet: "O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you, "Violence!" and you will not save?" (Heb 1: 2) wells up in the heart spontaneously.¹

These reassuring words by the Holy Father are so true- our daily experience does not always bear out our hopes and expectations. Still, we ought to persevere, because now may not be the moment.

Moses grew spiritually weary, in thinking that he needed to bear the load himself. Any parent, any child, any single person or pastor could feel the same, unless that person's life is centered on Christ. Jesus too taught that we must pray always without becoming weary. The persistent widow sought justice and it was granted to her. Let us gather in gratitude and mutual support, lifting not only our arms, but our hearts and minds to almighty God in thanks and praise.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Piazza del Plebiscito, Naples* Sunday, 21 October 2007