

Chapter 17 of the Book of Exodus opens with grumbling. The followers of Moses were thirsty, and while God eventually provided for them, they had put the Lord to the test by their constant complaining to Moses. Today's first reading is taken from the latter portion of this chapter and introduces us to the Amorites, ancient enemies of Israel.

Under the leadership of Amalek, they came to wage war against God's people. We encounter Moses giving Joshua a battle plan and then witness the amazing image of Moses raising his arms in a gesture of prayer. For us Christians, it calls to mind the outstretched arms of Jesus on the Cross—with which our 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? Helpers were sent in the persons of his brother Aaron and a man named Hur, who according to Jewish tradition, married Moses' sister Miriam.

Many Christians desire a posture of resignation, depending upon the mercy and grace of God. This attitude only comes through faith and is difficult for many people, including today's homilist to acquire. We are concerned about many things, we worry about our loved ones, about our jobs, our duties. We grow weary and become discouraged.

There is a story about Pope St. John XXIII, who confessed that he had difficulty falling asleep following his announcement of the convocation of the Second Vatican Council. He talked to himself saying: "Giovanni, why don't you sleep? Is it the pope or the Holy Spirit that governs the Church? It's the Holy Spirit, no? Well, then, go to sleep, Giovanni!"¹ I am keenly aware of the tremendous sacrifices you make in living good and faith-filled Christian lives. I see the joy that your families bring as you pray together, support one another in your many and varied

¹ Cf. Henri Fesquet, "Wit and Wisdom of Good Pope John," New York, Signet Books, 1964.

activities. I see faithful single adults, alongside of loving couples married many years faithfully coming to Church together. I see widows and widowers, now alone, who continue to move forward, fulfilling their vocations of holiness, even as the pain of loss remains strong.

Yet, the fact is we can all grow weary. 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. Like Moses, we cry 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, knowing 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 and difficulties. Yet, when we know that we are spending ourselves for good, God gives us sufficient grace 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 alone.

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. 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.