

October 20, 2013 – 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C
Persistence & Endurance in Prayer

The older I get the more I can sympathize with Moses as he walked with his staff of God.

After all, the Bible tells us that Moses was over 80 years old during the Exodus. Leaning on the staff is more to my liking than to hold it up over my head.

Why did Moses hold up the staff?

It was certainly a clear demonstration of prayer to the Lord – holding up the hands was a common gesture of prayer in those days.

We Christians have often adopted that prayer gesture over the centuries and we use at times in our liturgy of today.

There was a second reason for him holding the staff.

Moses told the troops that he would be up on the hill.

From the hilltop Moses could see the fight going on.

The troops could see him.

He wanted the troops to see and know that he was praying to the Lord for their success.

He wanted to encourage the troops with his gesture of prayer.

Actually, all of today's readings are addressing some aspect of prayer.

This first reading from Exodus suggests that we pray when we need God's help

The Psalm describes the Lord as our guardian, our source of help as we pray

The 2nd Letter to Timothy advises us to remain faithful and to be persistent in proclaiming the Word

And the Gospel has Jesus telling us to be persistent in prayer w/o becoming weary

With so much advice and encouragement about prayer in the readings what are the implications for us and our prayer today?

For our personal, one-on-one prayer with the Lord I would have the following suggestions:

- Our place for prayer can be anywhere:
 - o at home
 - o in the car
 - o in front of the Blessed Sacrament
 - o just about anywhere

- Our prayer style can take various forms
 - There are books and books full of prayers – from the saints of old all the way up to contemporary prayers
 - There is also the suggestion that I made a few weeks ago about personalizing the Lord’s Prayer and using it as a prayer starter for our own needs of the moment
 - We can start with something like this:
 - Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name ...
 - Dad, it’s been such a fine, fine day – I love the Autumn beauty of the trees that you have made – we are so blessed!
 - And we can continue talking with the Father about the ups and downs of our lives this very day
- A place for prayer and our style of prayer were easy questions – the tough question is when to pray
 - There my best advice is to carve out some time for prayer on a certain routine:
 - Morning and/or evening
 - Meal times
 - Time when you are alone like driving in your car
 - Trying to make it scheduled and routine is the top suggestion

But prayer is more than just God and me.

As we saw in today’s first reading there is a broader picture for prayer.

Prayer can and should also have a communal aspect to it.

Just think of the communal prayer that we are all sharing here at Mass.

As we parish members come together as a community we are a witness to all our fellow members.

- Being here in the pews is a source of encouragement to all the rest of us here
- Singing in choir encourages the prayerfulness of community
- Greeting acknowledges and uplifts people, both new and old
- Ushers offer another smile on the face as we hand out bulletins and help people with wheel chairs, etc.
- Ministering at altar – servers, lectors, EMEs, lit assistants demonstrate the reverential, prayerful atmosphere
- The priest celebrant holds up his hands in prayer just like Moses
 - As we witness his raised hands we get that sense that:

- “I am not alone in this ...
- the Lord is here with us ...
- other people care also ...
- we are in this together.”

Another communal prayer form is praying for the sick

- We can put their names in the bulletin
 - Brenda Martin is encouraged that we are praying for her, that we are in this together with her as she tries to overcome the results of a stroke
 - We can announce the names of the sick here at Mass
 - Simply telling people: “You are in my prayers.”
 - Sending them cards
 - Visiting the sick – Oh, wasn’t that what Jesus said to do in Matt 25?!

What about Jesus’ experience with prayer? Are there lessons for us there as well?

- Going away to pray alone – needing to chat with the Father about what to preach the next day.
- In the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before his crucifixion, praying “Thy will be done” in spite of his weariness and fears.
- And then hanging on the cross and saying, “Forgive them for they know not what they are doing.”

It seems that Jesus’ community support came right from the Father!

Yes, like Moses I need a staff to lean on.

I need you, the community.

I need your support.

I am sure that you also need support from the community.

Let’s all keep joining our fellow parish members here as we join in prayers to the Lord.