

Homily for the 29th Sunday of Year C Given at the Cathedral of St. Matthew on Oct. 20, 2019, by Fr. Christopher Wyvill

Gospel – Luke 18: 1 - 8

Good Question: “But when the Son of Man comes will he find any faith on earth?” One could ask the same about charity. When Jesus made predictions about the hard times coming before the end, the apostles asked him, “What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?” he responded that there would be famine, pestilence, earthquakes, persecution, betrayals; and that false prophets would come along to mislead many. He ended with, “Because of the increase of evil, the love of most will grow cold.” (Mt 24:11ff).

Well if faith becomes feeble and charity grows cold, what is left for hope? Evil seemingly is increasing - just read and listen to the news. Of course, not all is bad. Good deeds are done. Still hope seem to have diminished in our increasingly secular world. Maybe that is one of the things that contributes to the increase in suicides in our country, even among small children!

Well, in spite of the dark picture one may see, we do have reason to hope. God has a loving care of all of his creation, and has already demonstrated it. As St. John wrote, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life.” (Jn 3: 16).

If one does not believe that God has a concern for us his creatures, what would be the point of praying as Jesus taught and urged his disciples? When Jesus told the parable of the unjust judge we just heard it was to teach them the necessity of praying always and not losing heart. (Lk. 18: 1ff) If the corrupt judge gave in to the widow’s pestering, will not God, the just judge, hear and answer the prayers of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night.

That does not mean we must pray 24/7, day and night. We have our daily duties to do that occupy much of our mind and time. However in an age of instant information and auto responses, it is hard for some to persevere in praying when they do not get a quick answer. God’s time is not our time. In one of his letters St. Peter reminds us, “In the Lord’s eyes, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day. The Lord does not delay in keeping his promise – though some consider it ‘delay.’ Rather, he shows you generous patience, since he wants none to perish but all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3: 8)

Our prayers should be for more than just our needs, ‘Lord, I want this, I want that, and I want it very soon.’ By prayer we give God thanks and praise even when things are not going as well as we would like. If you have a bad hair day, you should still be able to say, “I will praise you anyway, God.”

We have extraordinary examples in the scriptures. The prophet Habakkuk concludes his writings with this. "For though the fig tree blossoms not nor fruit be on the vines, though the yield of the olive fail and terraces produce no nourishment, though the flocks disappear from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord and exult in my saving God. God my lord is my strength." (Hab. 3: 17-19). Would that we could all adopt that mentality of gratitude and thanks, no matter what crosses come into our lives.

Daniel's three young men threatened with the fiery furnace said to the king. "There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may he save us! But even if he will not, know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue which you set up." (Dan. 3: 16ff) What an example of fidelity to the covenant with their God whom they believe is the one and only true God.

More about prayer. It is true Jesus told us not to be hypocritical by praying in public to be seen, but rather to pray in private where the Father, "who sees what no man sees, will repay you." (Mt 6: 6). Yet in another place he said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst." (Mt. 18: 20) When we gather together for Mass, Jesus is with us. We can and should unite ourselves with his perfect prayer to our Father: The glory is yours. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Not mine but thy will be done. If we add our part of the prayer, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us," we may worthily eat his sacramental body and drink his blood where we have a pledge of eternal life with him.

So to him, the Son of God, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, let us give praise and thanksgiving, glory and honor, and our loving obedience now and forever. AMEN