**29th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle C**

October 19/20, 2019

Ex 17: 8-13; 2 Tim 3: 14-4: 2; Lk 18: 1-8

One thing I found out after my ordination to the diaconate was I became a very public person. I lost a lot of my privacy. It seemed to not matter whether a person was aware or not that I had been ordained; more and more people were approaching me about faith matters, and asking me to pray for one of their intentions. Ordination makes you a public servant and an advocate for others before God and men. Now, there is a certain suffering in all this; you have to give away your time and energy. A deacon is ordained to be permanently available to the needs of others, to support them, and advocate for them.

Those of us who are parents also have lost a lot of our privacy within our own homes. We are always available to our children, who so often come to us pleading their cases, needing and wanting our support. Over and over again they come, like the widow in the Gospel, wanting a response.

Every deacon and every good parent does not want to become like the “unjust judge” we hear about in the Gospel, who only grudgingly listens to the widow and her needs.

We can only imagine what life was like for that widow, who day after day made a pest of herself with the unjust judge. She just kept, you might say, praying that her cause would be heard and that a just judgment would be rendered in her favor. She must have been very frustrated at times, but she continued to plead her case. I can well imagine that each night she returned to her home and told her friends and her family about her plight, and they no doubt encouraged her to continue, to keep pleading, to not give up. They probably said they would go with her and give the judge their testimony. They supported her when she grew weary of it all until finally she was heard and an answer given her.

What, then, do we learn from our readings today? First, **we must persevere** **in prayer** and never cease praying. Jesus himself said as much in the Gospel, and in the parable of the widow says the same. Second, we are a **communion of saints**, who support the prayers and legitimate needs of each other.Certainly, God hears every prayer, but as Christians we are a family of believers, a family of prayer, we are, as the catechism says, a ***communion of saints*** who can intercede for each other. We can pray with and for each other. We can sustain each other so that, as Jesus says we must, we can “pray without ceasing.” Only with the support of each other can we pray constantly, pray without growing weary. We can ask both the living on earth and the saints in heaven to support our prayers and advocate for us.

Like Moses in our first reading, we need others to support our arms when weary. Like the friends of the widow who strengthened her resolve to persevere, indeed to be a pest, to the unjust judge.

Often, our praying arms can get heavy and tired. We feel alone as we pour ourselves out in prayer to God.

Some say we get tired because we are praying for what we want but not what God wants for us. Perhaps that is often true. I would suggest another reason that may be also true. We may weary praying, maybe even give up praying altogether, because we have tried to go it alone; we have not asked for support from each other; we have not prayed with others. Too often, I fear, we become “Lone Rangers” in our praying.

Just as no one can live totally alone all the time (for we are made for each other and for God and without each other and God we become weak and sick), so too no one can pray in isolation all the time. That is why those who say they have no need to come to Mass on Sunday, who say they find God alone as they walk in the woods or look at the sunset and thus do not need Church, that is why they eventually lose heart, get tired, and quit praying. That is why those who come to Church only for themselves and not to support the prayers and faith of others eventually become empty, disillusioned, and quit coming.

Yes, perhaps if our prayers seem not to be heard, or if we have wearied in our prayers, maybe even stopped praying altogether, it is because we have tried to go it alone, to muscle our prayers to God by our own effort, rather than relying on the support and prayer of others to assist us.

So, when someone asks you to pray with or for them, do it immediately. Do it with them on the spot. When you come to Mass, don’t say to yourself, “What will I get today?” but rather say, “How can I support the prayers and faith of those around me, by singing the hymns, by responding to the prayers with a loud “Amen!” and by asking God to hear the prayers of the person next to me and how can I ask someone this morning to pray for my needs?

“Help my pray! Pray with me. Pray for me. Pray that I not grow weary and stop praying.” We should be saying these to each other frequently.

Yes, lift up the arms of each other in prayer. Ask a fellow parishioner to pray with you and for you. And remember, not only can we ask the living, but we need and can ask the saints in heaven to support us and pray for us, especially our Blessed Mother Mary.