

## HOMILY FOR THE 29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

1. Exodus bloody sound to it – ends with Joshua mows down Amalek & people with edge of sword by power of Moses arms held up in prayer
  - a. As literal history makes God rather gruesome and dependent on Moses
  - b. Recognize it as a story, many things can learn from it
  - c. Stories like this and in Psalms encouraging when I had cancer
    - i. Image the cancer cells as the enemy, doctors like Joshua trying to kill cells with chemo
    - ii. Myself like Moses trying to hold up through challenges of chemo
    - iii. Prayers of others like the support by Aaron and Hur, supporting Moses arms when he gets tried
2. All three readings today challenge us to be persistent in our prayer
  - a. To be persistent we need to ask what do we expect from prayer
  - b. First inclination is to look at prayer as some kind of magical incantation
  - c. If I say the right words long enough, force God to do what I want
  - d. When I had cancer, I would have like God to work a major wonder, out of the blue take away all tumors and cancer cells
  - e. But God seldom breaks laws of nature
  - f. Works through the skills and knowledge available to us
  - g. Medical Miracles work through medicine, placebo effect, things we have yet to learn
  - h. Mystery of prayer is that God keeps His freedom, allows creation to operate on its own laws and yet wonders do happen
3. Jesus tells the story of the unjust judge
  - a. He is not concerned about God or giving justice to anyone
  - b. Focused on his own gain and freely admits it to himself
  - c. Imagine in this society a woman has no rights, oldest male is to speak for her
  - d. This widow apparently has no one to speak for her, she is totally alone
  - e. When she comes to the court of this judge, easy to imagine the judge would have no interest in her, what would he gain
  - f. She has nothing left to lose but her life, so she keeps coming to the judge demanding her rights

- g. Translation says he fears she may strike him, commentary suggested closer translation is she may give me a black eye
  - h. Metaphor fit the story better, the judge fear being shamed by the widow
  - i. He is not going to want it to be obvious that he is an unjust judge, her continued coming to him could turn the community against him, save face by giving her, her rights
  - j. Important aspect of this story is the confidence of the widow, she knows she is in the right and will not take no for an answer
4. Jesus says if you can imagine an unjust judge giving a persistent woman justice, why do you not believe that a loving God will give you what you need
- a. Persistence in prayer is not about wearing God down so He will give us what we want
  - b. It is about believing, do we believe that God loves us and wants what is best for us
  - c. Do we really believe in ourselves as having been made worthy of God's gifts
  - d. When we ask for something, is it something that truly makes us a better person or is the momentary whim of a spoiled child
    - i. How often do we find ourselves wanting some toy with our whole heart until we get it
    - ii. Then we get bored and see another toy
5. Prayer is not just about saying words, it is about letting faith be present throughout our life
- a. Prayer is more like an attitude
  - b. Sense of gratitude – appreciate how gracious and kind God continually is to me
  - c. Attitude of trust believing that God really cares about us, we are not alone in the world
  - d. Not only are we not alone, we are part of God's people, the very Body of Christ
  - e. Sense of confidence and trust, do not just simply happen
  - f. we have to open ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit
  - g. at times we must consciously pray both privately and with the community to develop an attitude of confidence and trust in God
  - h. Only when we develop this spirit of confidence and trust in God, do we allow Him to transform us and become the person we are meant to be.