

29th Sunday (C)

16th October 2016

‘Pray Continually’

Exod 17: Moses persevering in prayer for Israel Ps 120: *Let him sleep not, your guard.*
2Tim 3–4: *refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience ... with patience*
Lk 18:1–8: *pray continually and never lose heart.*

As you probably know, I go weekly into the classes in our two parish Primary Schools, and I always begin our time together with a moment of prayer. That’s because I want my period with them in class to feel different to any other lesson. I want them to realise that we are entering into a different sort of discussion together: something that is a sacred time. And often I introduce our prayer with something like this: “God is always around us ... He is always with us. When we stop to pray we acknowledge His presence and speak to Him.” I think that this is important: when we pray, we are not opening a conversation and trying to get God’s attention, are we? We are turning our mind back to God who is always, at every moment, turned towards us. However long or short a time it is since we last prayed, God is already ready and waiting, attentive to us.

In all the challenges of our lives we are best to resort to prayer. And yet, as Jesus says, our prayer should never

just be our lifeline when things are tough ... *Jesus told His disciples about the need to pray continually and never lose heart.* It’s not just in the challenges, but at all moments that we need the discipline of prayer. Prayer is *the raising of the heart and mind to God.* It includes the essential public prayer of the Mass and other liturgy in the Church; it includes those private prayer times that we set aside, whether here in the Church, in devout quietness, or in the privacy of our homes. In addition to this, our prayer is supplemented by that *need to pray continually* that Jesus talks of. This is something that indeed we can do continually, as each and every day goes by. We can pepper our day with a simple *raising of the heart and mind to God*, a few moments of prayer, as simple as an occasional little phrase like “Lord Jesus, help me.” To turn our heart and mind to God repeatedly throughout the day in prayer will always help us be filled with the Holy Spirit, and able to cope with the challenges of each day. To be a prayerful person will give us a greater chance of making the right decisions, saying the right words, adopting the right

attitudes at each and every moment. Only God can instil this in us ... Only God can *enlarge our heart* (as St Augustine says) through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Prayer is the key to all of this, so everything that happens each day can proceed from, and be taken back to, that forum in which we communicate with our God and Maker.

In this regard, of course, the Rosary is an invaluable guide. As every year, this month of October is the month of the Rosary. It's a powerful and a simple prayer which effectively and directly locates our prayer within the Supreme Prayer of Christ's life, death and resurrection. We accompany Christ in the presence of Our Lady through the mysteries of His life. And no better guide could we have than Our Lady to bring us to closeness with the Lord.

We all have a rosary, I suspect, but how often are they taken out? In my many years as a Hospital Chaplain I often remember seeing people using their rosary more as a charm! No point in having it round your neck as a fashion item if you never pray it! Little value in the dying clutching it in their hands if it has never been recited!

The recitation of the rosary, its simple, repetitive, mantra of *Our Fathers, Hail Marys & Glory Bes* are there to aid our meditation. We can pray each mystery 'for' some intention, e.g. praying for NN. during XX mystery. Say it walking along, even, as it's a prayer for any time or place, e.g. for walking to work or to the station (especially since our 10 fingers can do just as well as the 10 beads for counting). You can say 1 decade or 5. Why not try for the rest of this month to re-connect with the rosary, the prayer that weaves together much of our Catholic life & faith. (Note: plenty of Rosary cards in the CTS racks in the porch.) But whether with the rosary, or with simple little phrases to Christ, or night prayers in the family, let's renew our efforts to *pray continually and never lose heart*.

It does demand effort and perseverance to keep at our prayers, but it's the faithfulness in little things that makes our lives holy, and prepares us for the great life of prayer in heaven that we all yearn for. Let's not disappoint Our Lord Jesus ... when the Son of Man comes, He must find faith on earth ... He must find us at our prayers!