

29th Sunday (C)

20th October 2019

'Pray Continually and Never Lose Heart'

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.*

The challenge of the Lord today in the Gospel is: *pray continually and never lose heart!* It's a straightforward message, and a direct one. Pray! Don't give up on praying. Make sure it's a part of your every day ... a part of who you are: your most intimate relationship, that with the God who made you.

When we pray, we are not trying to change God's mind about something, about His loving us, or His giving us the best ... As Jesus says in the parable, contrasting the all-loving, perfect God to the dishonest judge, He reminds us that He will never give us anything but the best. He knows what is good for us, "He will see justice done, and done speedily." His relationship with us, in other words, is utterly faithful and loyal — completely dependable. And this means that though we are less than totally faithful to Him, we can trust that God is always attentive to us. We need have no fears that when we turn to God He will assist

us in our necessities. But of course in order best to understand His will, to know what is good for us, and to stay on course for heaven, we have to act in ways that demonstrate our love for God. If we say we pray, but our lives are actually far from Him, then no wonder we will have difficulty seeing that He is acting for our good. If we are neglectful of God, ceasing to pray, staying away from the regular worship of Him, or ignoring our neighbour, then it's likely that we will not see how God answers our prayers. Only when our minds and hearts are attuned with His will are we going to see how He works continually in our lives for our good.

Sometimes God's answer will mean we must wait, patiently, expectantly, longingly for something — the Lord asking to expand our hearts in our desire for Him as we wait. Sometimes things will simply be denied us ... things we thought we should have, or deserve. But the Lord sees the whole picture, and knows how to bring about what is better for us. Sometimes, it is simply our sins and wrongdoing that thwart the better thing from happening,

and we need to repent of those and seek the Lord's forgiveness. But in whatever circumstance, let's not lose heart. The Lord Jesus is the passionate lover of our souls, desiring only what brings us closer to Him and to heaven; and He will simply not will anything that leads away from Him, even if that is what we think we want.

Our newly canonized English saint, Cardinal Newman wrote some very beautiful prayers, and one of His most famous expresses in tender words the trust in God in prayer that we should all exercise. He experienced all sorts of setbacks and failures in his life, and any number of disappointments, and moments of feeling abandoned or opposed. He knew, even from a young age, as a teenager, that God was truly with him, and that he could exercise absolute trust in the goodness of God to guide his life. Thank God, then, for this great new saint of our land, a man of deep and constant prayer, and who helps us live daily that command of Jesus: *pray continually and never lose heart!* Here are the words of Newman's famous prayer ... let's allow this prayer to become our own, and in doing so renew

our trust in the Lord who loves us so much:

*God has created me to do Him some definite service.
He has committed some work to me,
which He has not committed to another.
I have my mission – I may never know it in this life,
but I shall be told it in the next.
I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between
persons.
He has not created me for nothing.
I shall do good. I shall do His work.
I shall be an angel of peace,
a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it,
if I do but keep His commandments
and serve Him in my calling.
Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever, wherever I am.
I cannot be thrown away.
If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him;
in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him.
If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.
He does nothing in vain; He may prolong my life, He may
shorten it; He knows what He is about.
He may take away my friends,
He may throw me among strangers,
He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink,
hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about.*