

29<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time “Is There Faith on Earth?”

Bishop Frank Schuster

Sometimes we can forget that God has a sense of humor! We see two great examples in today’s readings. First, we have the Gospel parable about the dishonest judge that will render a just decision, not because it’s the right thing to do but because the judge is tired of being nagged to death. In the first reading, we also have that interesting situation of Amalek trying to engage the Israelites in battle. So long as Moses’ arms are in the air, the Israelites get the better of Amalek and his troops. But when Moses’ arms begin to get tired, Amalek’s group gets the better of the Israelites. What is the Israelites solution? Aaron and Hur show up to give support to Moses’ arms. “Moses, for the love of God, keep those arms up!” The moral of these stories? Be persistent in prayer! Jesus invites us to be persistent in our prayer life! This message is important because Jesus challenges his disciples with the rhetorical question, “When the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?” This is a haunting question, isn’t it? “When the Son of Man comes will he find faith?”

My friends, instead of seeing the two warring tribes of the first reading in historical terms, I like to look at it in spiritual terms. You see, there are many times in life when I feel like there is a war being engaged inside my heart. It is a battle between my virtues and my vices. When we keep our spiritual arms up in prayer, like Moses, we tend to get the better of the vices inside of us, warring against us. When my prayer life begins to get lax, the battle within the heart can rage ever more. Have you ever noticed that whenever life feels off kilter, our prayer life is usually the first thing to suffer? Persistence in prayer is therefore important, especially when we are having a rough time in life. I really liked the fact that Moses needed his friends, Aaron and Hur, to help support him in his prayer life. I know in my life that I can’t do it alone. I need my family, friends, my worshiping community, and the intercession of the saints to help me. We all do.

Along those lines, have you considered that a friendship with God is a lot like friendships with people? Do you want a sure way to destroy a friendship with someone? Refuse to communicate with them! Prayer is how we communicate with God and allow God to communicate with us. How do we grow in our relationship with God? The second reading says it very clearly. Know the Sacred Scriptures, which gives us wisdom for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Reading a little Scripture each day, of course, also requires persistence. Why does Jesus invite us to be persistent in our prayer life? God cannot have a relationship with you if you don’t take the time to have a relationship with him.

Jesus therefore asks us, “When the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?” It is a haunting question. “When the Son of Man comes will he find faith?” It is an important question right now because we live in dangerous times. Russia is waging war against Ukraine, there is the threat of nuclear weapons and our country’s promise to respond. Meanwhile, at home, basic needs are becoming too expensive for many. It is as if the Church is asking us to look at the times we live in and ask the question: What is our faith made of? Can we keep our arms raised in prayer, even as the hordes of proverbial enemies in life come attacking against our souls? Can we accept the help of others to keep our arms up in prayer, so we don’t get defeated in life? Can we be faithful citizens who pray and speak up for peace and fairness in a world all too often plagued with injustice and fear? Are we faithful in good times and in bad in our relationship with God or are we fair weather disciples?

Jesus therefore commands us to be persistent in our prayers. Persistence in prayer begins with a close relationship with God, love for Sacred Scripture and trust that God knows what is best for us. This means having faith that even if God doesn’t answer our prayers the way we want, he will answer every prayer the way he knows we need it most. Jesus’ question should therefore stay with us this week, “when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?” At the end of the day, the only person who can meaningfully answer that question is you in the manner you live your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.