

29th Sun. Ord. Time (C)  
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes  
October 15, 16, 2016

We have just heard the story of a widow asking for justice. That the person asking is a widow is very important; this is a powerless figure. The widow is someone who has no resources of her own to rely on. The judge, on the other hand, is clearly figure who has both power and resources, and, in his own mind at least, enough power and resources to have no respect for the widow, and even no regard for God. As the story goes, the widow persists in her asking until she eventually wears down the judge. *“I will render a just decision lest she finally come and strike me.”*

Scripture scholars teach that the judge's words are more desperate and extreme than what our English words indicate; the translation is milder in English than in the original Greek. In Greek the story reads, *“Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps hitting me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not give me a black eye by continually coming.”* Yet, the widow who had no power was able to lead the powerful judge to some kind of just response.

So,.... What will it take to keep to lead you to justice, to keep you faithful to Jesus?

Who will serve as the widow to keep you faithful?

Who are the couple of friends, like Aaron and Hur in today's First Scripture, who will support your arms in prayer?

Who will keep

you persistent in your discipleship, even when it is inconvenient?

As

the gospel text ends, *“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”*

Will the Son of Man find anyone on earth alert to His will? Are any intent on carrying out His plan?

The question raised in today's Scriptures is

how will I remain persistent in my prayer, in my connection with God, and how will I extend my connection and relationship with God beyond myself to others.

Salvation

is not just for me, but for the world!

Let me give you an example that is rather close at hand, but one that you may never think much about. It is also very close to me personally. Every Sunday evening there is a unique kind of 'church' that meets here at St. Athanasius. You see the meeting time printed on every monthly calendar you receive. It says “Jesup AA”. I call it a church, because in a broad sense that is what it is, and that is how I experience it for myself when I attend. **(Yes .... what I have not yet shared with you about myself, but just did, is that I am a recovering alcoholic. It has been a good number of years now. It has actually taken me longer to share this piece of myself here than in the other two parishes I have served as pastor. The main reason why is that I don't share it to just grab attention to myself, or in any way risk detracting from the message of my preaching. I do it this week because it just seemed**

to fit.) The Sunday meeting here on site is for many an hour with friends who, powerless themselves, find their 'higher power' necessary, and who are willing to share that fact with others. It is what keeps them persistent on their path. I am more and more convinced that if many of us took our faith, our relationship with God as seriously as 'the Sunday night church' members take their quest, parishes would be different. And the question, "Will the Son of Man find anyone on earth alert to His will, and intent on carrying out His plan?" would have a clearer answer.

Why do I say this?

Sunday night for that 'church' is very sacred, never to be missed without a very good reason. The community of the Sunday night church is strong, and supportive. They know about each other, and they care about each other. When one is not there for a couple of weeks, there is brotherly concern .... not prying, but genuine concern. Like Aaron and Hur who supported the arms of Moses, they support each other in their need. Most in the Sunday night church have another person as a partner on their path .. they have a special name for this. Most in the Sunday night church read a daily reflection from a common book they share; it too has a special name. And, at the Sunday night church they share their thoughts and progress about the path they are on. It is really quite amazing! Not all in the 'Sunday night church' call it church, or even think of it as church. Many have gone to church earlier in the day. But from my perspective, and what it does for me when I attend, it is so much like a church, that I have grown to think of it in those terms and even speak of it in those terms as I am doing with you today. Those at the 'Sunday night church' admit their powerlessness, seek help, share their progress, and reach out to others. We need to do the same. The other important piece of the Sunday night church is that there is a true sense of mission. When they see others, who they think might profit from being a part of them, they are very welcoming and helpful to connect them. Above all, everyone at the Sunday night Church knows very well the consequences of not being persistent in their journey.

Jesus calls us to be as persistent in our discipleship. A few weeks ago we hear Jesus lament that many are wiser in things of the world than they are about spiritual things. It was after the parable of the steward being fired. I have a suggestion ..... This week take 5-10 minutes each day to read from Scripture or from some spiritual book. (Scripture is better, however .... it is the very Word of God.) Or, read for 5 minutes and then sit quietly with what you have read for the other 5 minutes. It is called "divine reading" (*lectio divina*) If we do this, things will happen in the parish, things will grow deeper, it will feel more like the Kingdom of God. **Our goal is always: to do the will of God .... to pray until our hearts become the heart of God. The 'Sunday night church' just might be the model for our growing as disciples of Jesus.**