

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



“Jesus told them a parable about the necessity to pray always without becoming weary...”

The widow in today’s Gospel had such a need that she incessantly bothered the unscrupulous judge until she was heard. Jesus compares her attitude to that of prayer. To pray without ceasing, even if it seems we are not being heard.

Unlike the widow, most people say a Hail Mary on the fly, and then wonder why God doesn’t listen to them.

The widow prays incessantly, as does Moses in the first reading today. Moses prays with his arms outstretched. That’s not an easy thing to do, try it! After a couple of minutes your arms feel like lead and begin to droop. You’ll feel a searing pain in your shoulders. Aaron and Hur stood on either side of Moses and held his arms aloft. Aaron was Moses’ brother, and Hur was his brother-in-law (the husband of Miriam). These two men were enabling Moses’ intercession. Aaron’s name means

‘strength;’ Hur’s means ‘liberty.’ As long as Moses’ hands were raised, the people of God defeated their enemy, Amalek. When he let his arms rest, Amalek had the better of the fight.

Each of us has an Amalek in our life, a mortal enemy who wants to defeat us. This enemy can only be overcome with prayer.

Jesus invites us to pray like the widow – incessantly, and like Moses –with our hands raised, supported by others.

How can we do that?

A book titled “The Russian Pilgrim” relates the story of a Russian peasant who wanted to learn how to pray incessantly. He met a ‘starets’, a wise monk, who taught him the prayer of the blind man in the Gospel:

“Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me because I am a sinner.”

The pilgrim began to repeat the prayer, as instructed, first for one thousand times a day, then for five thousand times a day, then ten thousand times a day... until the prayer became a part of him, in his breathing, his heartbeat, while awake or asleep. He began to see his enemies, his Amaleks, that is, his spiritual enemies, defeated. His anxieties, his doubts, his worries, his fears, his presumptions, his lust, his pride...began to subside.

This prayer of the heart, “Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner” can be prayed incessantly.

It is called the prayer of the heart. It is the prayer we were invited to pray at the first night of the Catechesis that we are doing on Mondays and Thursdays at 8:00pm. I invite all of us to come and listen to this Catechesis, in doing so we can experience that our Amaleks, the enemies of our soul, will begin to be mowed down.

But we cannot do this alone. We all need an Aaron and a Hur at our side to keep our arms aloft when they grow weary. None of us can live our faith, our Christianity in a bubble, in isolation. We were created in the image of God, and God is a community of persons. Each of us needs a community to support us in our faith and in our prayer. This community can be found in the Church.

Fr. Sean