

We find ourselves now in early autumn when the temperatures can be warm or cold. School is well under way, more than a month already. In the Church it's not Advent yet, and Easter was months ago. So that means it is Ordinary Time, the time outside of special Church seasons, when we listen to lessons Jesus tried to teach the people who followed Him, His disciples (and us). Today's lesson has to do with prayer.

So when you pray, you are talking to God. But you should also be trying to listen to God. Now this second part is a little harder, since God doesn't usually just strike up a conversation with us. But the point today is that the more we pray to God, the better we will be at understanding what He thinks, what He is trying to tell us. And how often should we pray? St. Paul says (1 Thes 5:16-17a—not in today's reading) that we should pray always without stopping. You should thank God for everything, the food that you eat, the air that you breathe, your parents, your family, your friends, your nice, warm home, and so on. Most of us would let St. Paul down, because we do not pray without stopping. But shouldn't we pray at least every day? How about first thing in the morning after you get up, last thing at night before you go to bed, and with meals? That would be a good start, and then perhaps you can try to follow St. Paul's advice to pray always as later time goes by.

Today's first reading has to do with prayer. It comes from the Old Testament (which, you'll remember, happened before Jesus was born).

A reading from the book of Exodus (Exodus 17:8-13)

Then Amalek came and waged war against Israel in Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men for us, and tomorrow go out and engage Amalek in battle. I will be standing on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." Joshua did

as Moses told him; he engaged Amalek in battle while Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of the hill. As long as Moses had his hands raised up, the soldiers of Israel would be winning the battle, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek would start winning the battle. However, Moses hands grew tired, so he sat on a rock. Meanwhile, Aaron and Hur supported each of his hands, standing one on one side and one on the other, so that Moses' hands remained steady until sunset. And Joshua and his soldiers defeated Amalek and his people. The Word of the Lord.

So Moses and his two assistants were watching over the battle while the soldiers of Israel are fighting Amalek for their land. While Moses was watching his hands were raised up. And while his hands were raised up, Joshua and the soldiers of Israel would be winning the battle. And when his arms got tired and he let them fall, Joshua and his soldiers would start to lose the battle. What Moses was doing with his arms raised up was he was praying, just like the priest does when he prays during Mass. Moses had to pray for hours until sunset in order for Joshua and the soldiers of Israel to win the battle. That's a lot of praying, don't you think? He had to pray for so long that, as mentioned, his arms got tired, and he needed help; Aaron and Hur had to hold his arms up. It's not always easy to pray, is it? But is it important to pray? It sure looks like it was important for the soldiers of Israel.

Next is our psalm for today, Psalm 121.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 121:1-2,3-4,7-8)

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

When I want to know where my help comes from, I raise my eyes toward the mountains. My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

He will not allow your foot to slip or your guardian to sleep. Look! Israel's guardian never sleeps.

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

The Lord will guard you from all evil; He will guard your soul. The Lord will guard your coming and going now and forever.

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 121 tells us what the first reading about Joshua's battle with Amalek showed us. "My help comes from the Lord." When Moses prayed to God with outstretched arms, the soldiers of Israel were successful in battle with the help of God.

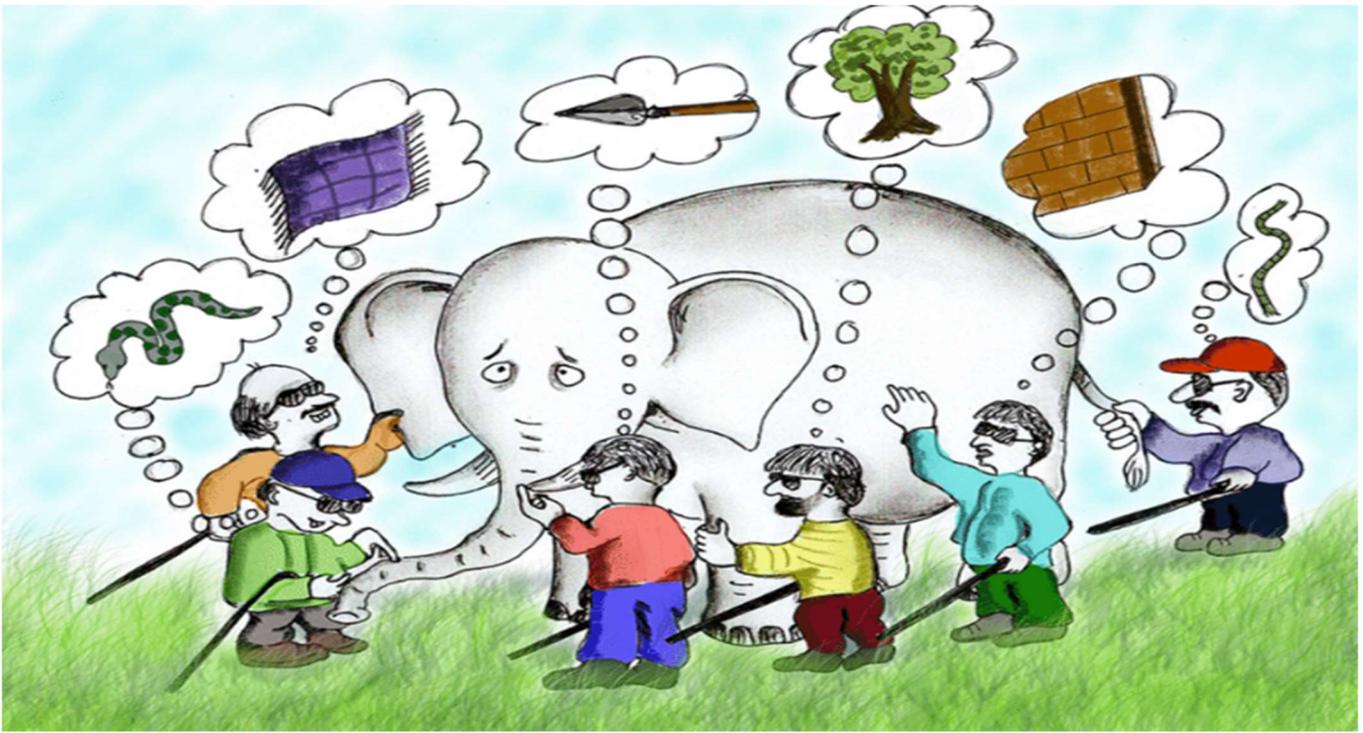
A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to Timothy (2 Tim [3:14-17] 4:1-2)

Sisters and brothers: [You continue to believe what you have learned from me, because you have always known sacred scriptures, which can help you understand that you can be saved by faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture has been directed by God to be written by man and is useful for teaching, especially for training in being good and doing good works, so that anyone who believes in God may be able to do all kinds of good works.] When Christ Jesus comes as King, He will be the judge of everyone, whether he or she is living or dead. So with God and Christ as witnesses, I command you to preach God's message. Do it willingly, even if it is not the popular thing to do. You must correct people and point out their sins. But also cheer

them up, and when you instruct them, always be patient. The Word of the Lord.

In this second reading Paul is telling us how important scripture is. When Paul's letters were being written, the writings of Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul had not become the parts of the New Testament yet. So for Paul, when he discussed scripture, he was speaking of the Hebrew Bible, which is our Old Testament, which is still important, otherwise we wouldn't be hearing it in our first readings most Sundays of the year. Paul is also telling us that it is important for us to spread God's message, even when it's not so easy or popular to do.

In today's gospel, Jesus is a little bit humorous with His story or parable. There's a word: *humor*. Simply put, humor is something which is funny. It is funny because it is unexpected or perhaps even ridiculous. Sometimes humor can be used to teach us lessons. Before discussing today's gospel, let's talk about an old parable from India which teaches many lessons even though it is humorous. Once upon a time there were six blind men who heard that an elephant was coming to town. Since none of them had ever heard of an elephant, they went to try to figure out what this animal was by touching it, since they couldn't look at it because they were blind. So they gathered around the elephant and started to share their experiences.



The man feeling the elephant's trunk said, "The elephant is like a snake." The man feeling its tusk said with just as much certainty, "The elephant is like a spear." Then the man feeling an ear said, "The elephant is like a rug." But the man feeling the elephant's leg was sure when he said, "The elephant is like a tree," while the fellow feeling the elephant's massive body was just as sure when he said, "The elephant is like a wall." Finally the man feeling the tail concluded, "The elephant is like a rope." While all six of them were partially right, they were all wrong, and any argument with each other wasn't going to solve their problem. You can see the humor. The last time you saw a picture of a snake, you probably did not think, "That reminds me of an elephant"? Nor when you walk past the wall of a building are you thinking "elephant." But that's what makes the story humorous. We could talk for a long time about this old parable from India, but we need to get back to the gospel.

The gospel acclamation:

Alleluia, Alleluia. Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Word of God is living and active; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts.

Alleluia, Alleluia.

A reading from the holy gospel according to St. Luke (Luke 18:1-8).

Jesus told His disciples a story about how they should keep on praying and never give up: “In a town there was once a judge who didn’t fear God or care about people. In that same town there was a widow who kept going to the judge and saying, ‘Make sure that I get fair treatment in court.’ “For a while the judge refused to do anything. Finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about people, I will help this widow because she keeps on bothering me. If I don’t help her, she will wear me out.’” The Lord said, “Think about what that crooked judge said. Won’t God protect His chosen ones who pray to Him day and night? Won’t He be concerned for them? He will surely hurry and help them. But when the Son of Man comes, will He find on this earth anyone with faith?” The gospel of the Lord.

So Jesus tried a little humor on His disciples. Here is this not-very-nice judge who is sick and tired of this widow pestering him about her needs. You can almost picture Jesus talking about this judge complaining about the widow and finally giving in to her demands, not because he believed in God and the commandments, but just to get rid of her. “Enough already!” Now Jesus was not a standup comedian. (Can you imagine? “Good evening ladies and joims, a priest and a rabbi walked into a bar to talk about the kingdom of heaven,” ba dum bum!) No, but He was not above telling a parable which would have been humorous to the people of that time in order to make a point. If this corrupt judge would grant the widow’s requests, how much more would God, our loving Father, respond to our sincere prayers?

So today's Bible readings deal mostly with prayer. Moses' continuous praying was needed for Joshua and his soldiers to win the battle for their land. The psalm tells us what Moses was praying for, namely that our help comes from the Lord. And Jesus explains, with a little bit of humor, that God will answer us if we pray and pray a lot, like the widow kept asking the judge for what she wanted. So if we pray to God, a lot, for what we need that is important, He will answer our prayer.

And that, girls and boys, is the lesson in today's readings. Speak with your parents about it.

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2022

Joseph Calderone

Note: The Lectionary for Masses with Children omits the first reading from Exodus, shortens the second reading from St. Paul to include only the first two verses of the fourth chapter (omitting the part above in [brackets]), and uses Psalm 96 instead of Psalm 121. The readings and psalm in this homily more closely mirror the readings and psalm from the adult Mass' Lectionary. Psalm 96 is included here for reference.

Psalm 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5

Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Sing a new song to the Lord! Everyone on this earth, sing praises to the Lord, sing and praise His name.

Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Day after day announce, "The Lord has saved us!" Tell every nation on earth, "The Lord is wonderful and does marvelous things!"

Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

The Lord is great and deserves our greatest praise! He is the only God worthy of our worship. Other nations worship idols, but the Lord created the heavens.

Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.