

Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

It is not unusual to hear the stories of people who have overcome great difficulties in their lives to achieve what they had hoped for. And for most of these people it has been hard work and single-minded perseverance that enabled them to achieve their goals. Today we are being urged by Jesus to apply hard work and perseverance to the way that we pray. Jesus makes the point by using a rather lighthearted story. We could hear Jesus saying, “Remember that widow who was trying to get justice from the judge who kept putting her off. She had no one to stand up for her. No husband to speak for her. No sons to lend their weight to the case. She kept going back time and time again to the judge, but nothing happened until the judge realized that the woman would worry him to death. It was only then that the rouge of a judge finally heard her case and gave her the justice that was owed to her.

The point that Jesus then makes is that we have a God who is so much better than that unjust judge. “Now will not God see justice done to his chosen who cry to him day and night even when he delays to help them? Some scholars translate this sentence as “Now will not God do justice for his elect ones who are crying out to him day and night, and show patience towards them?” and then go on, “I promise you, he will see justice done to them and done speedily.”

The persistence that moves us to keep praying to God comes not from thinking that God will get tired of our constant prayers and finally give in. No. We keep praying because we have learned to put our faith and trust in our God. We keep praying because we have come to know who God is. We know God to be like a loving parent who cannot resist giving us the things we need. But like a good parent, God does not give us everything we want. God even makes us wait for some of the good things we need. One commentator suggests that we need time to be hammered into the vessel that is shaped to hold the good things that God offers us.

We keep praying to God because we have learned to put our trust in God. Some would say that we have not learnt how to pray until we have learnt how to patiently wait for our prayers to be answered. One holy man said that we only know how to pray when we have been knocking on God’s door until our knuckles are bleeding.

Jesus ends today’s gospel with a question. “But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?” He is asking if there are people of faith who like the widow in the parable cry out to God day and night. That is the question that we have to ask ourselves. Is crying out to God day and night for what we need part of who we are? Or are we people who have faith for a time but in a

season of testing fall away? I think our gospel is helping us to see that praying to God is not an optional exercise in piety to demonstrate our relationship with God. Prayer is our relationship with God. The way that we pray reveals that relationship.

People of faith are often able to see their prayers answered when others cannot see that. Their vision is wide enough to be able to see God at work, even when it seems to be in the wrong place. People with little faith find it much harder to see how God is answering their prayers. If God's response is a little off center, then they miss it all together.

Today we are celebrating Mission Sunday. It is an opportunity to thank God for those members of our Church who have faith enough to give up the comforts of what is familiar and offer themselves to bring the good news of Jesus to wherever in the world people need to hear that good news.

The appeal this year focuses on the work of the Church in Ghana as they provide support to children in need. The Catholic Mission Website allows us to meet Sarah and Sr. Stan. When Sarah was four years old, she was wrongly implicated in the deaths of fifteen people in her community, simply because she had a speech impediment. In accordance with local customs in parts of

northern Ghana, some people in Sarah's community believed the little girl to be a "spirit child". Under these customs, any child born with a disability or whose mother dies during their birth may be considered a bad omen, and their lives placed at risk. Many in Sarah's community, including her own family, became furious at her inability or unwillingness to speak and defend herself against the allegations, casting her out and threatening to kill her.

Thankfully, Sister Stan Therese Mumuni and the local Church was made aware of the imminent danger Sarah was in. Sister Stan recalls fighting—almost physically—to save Sarah from the most terrible fate and give her a new chance at life. The funds raised through the Church Appeal contribute to vital faith and community building projects in mission lands around the world. Our support is crucial in ensuring all of God's people can have life to the full. Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the international Pontifical Mission Societies. The Society raises funds and forms people for mission. This enables our Church to reach out through heroic missionaries and community leaders to help children and communities in need and provide vital training for seminarians and other young leaders. Today we are invited to take one of the Mission envelopes or contribute to the collection at the end of Mass today.