

## **As Long as Moses Held up his Hands**

Over the past weeks we've reflected on prayer — as relationship, as daily habit, as something we keep learning. This Sunday's readings pick up that same theme but move one step further: persistence. Prayer isn't only a conversation; it's a commitment. Hopefully by now, many of us have begun to build a more regular routine of prayer. Today's readings remind us why that matters, because it's perseverance in prayer that wins battles.

Our first reading gives us the lovely image of Moses on the hilltop, hands lifted while Joshua fights below. As long as his hands are raised in prayer, God's people prevail; when he lowers them, they falter. Eventually his arms grow weary, and Aaron and Hur come beside him, supporting his hands till sunset.

That's also a picture of the Church at prayer! The woman in the Gospel prays for herself; Moses is there praying for a whole people.

"As long as Moses held up his hands in prayer, they won." That line could sum up the entire Christian life. Victory comes from dependence on God.

There's a beautiful saying attributed to Pope Francis: "Prayer is God's weakness." He means that the Almighty allows Himself to be moved by the cry of His people. When we pray, we touch the heart of God; we draw on His mercy.

And we owe much to those who persist in that prayer — monks, nuns, hermits, and ordinary intercessors in every parish.

Centuries ago, one writer went as far as saying:

"Religious persons ought to be maintained at the public expense, though they render no exterior service, for even in their cells they render a great service to the world. It is for love of a few virtuous persons that God bears with the sins of so many, and that God never ceases to shower blessings on his people."

Our parish life mirrors that scene on the hill. Sometimes one person's arms grow tired, through illness, grief, discouragement, or sheer busyness — and that's when others step in to help. We support one another's faith by praying together, by gathering for Eucharist, by interceding for those who can't pray for themselves. And for the many people living within our parish territory who might not even believe in God, our prayers and our Masses help them too.

In the gospel we hear of a widow who keeps pleading for justice from a judge who doesn't care about God or people. She has no power, no influence, but she has persistence. Eventually the judge gives in, not out of goodness, but because she simply won't stop knocking.

If an unjust judge will answer persistence, Jesus says, how much more will our loving Father respond to His children? The story isn't about wearing God down, it's about trusting Him enough not to give up.

I read last month that we can judge the strength of our faith not by what we do on Sunday, but by what we do on Monday. The person who continues to pray on Monday morning, amid work or family life, shows the perseverance Jesus is talking about, the perseverance which is God's weakness and leads to him hearing our prayers.