



The Word ...

Moses' hands, however, grew tired;
so they put a rock in place for him to sit on.
Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands,
one on one side and one on the other,
so that his hands remained steady till sunset.

(from Ex 17:8-13)

“...Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient;
convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.”

(from 2 Tm 3:14-4:2)

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always
without becoming weary... “Will not God then secure the rights
of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night?”

(from Lk 18:1-8)

Pondering the Word ...

Our words for this week: persistence and perseverance. (Sigh.) “Yes, yes, we know. We’ve persevered but frankly, it’s getting a bit tiresome!” And pretty soon, we will be getting to the readings prior to Advent that warn of the end of the world. We do indeed need to persist, but we don’t have to do it alone.

In the first reading—which, incidentally, is the first time we hear of the Israelites demonstrating their own military prowess, not just God’s—Joshua has to depend on Moses’ recourse with God, and Moses has to depend on Aaron and Hur. It’s a team effort, both human and divine.

Paul tells Timothy to keep up the good work, knowing that both Paul and God are with him, equipping him for every good work even when things get a bit dicey.

And I love the imagery of this gospel reading, particularly the feisty widow. As the saying goes, “the squeaky wheel gets the grease” when it comes to God rendering justice.

But in what sounds like a non sequitur at the end of this passage, Jesus sighs seemingly to himself: “*But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*” “Will you persist in the face of difficulty?” “Will faith remain?”

Living the Word...

This is a question to ask ourselves, particularly on days when we know our faith and hope will be challenged. A few thoughts: Don’t go it alone. Look and be grateful for the “Aarons and Hurs” in your life. Don’t let others go it alone. Be a support system for someone else. Consider praying the words of today’s Psalm 121: “*My help is from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. May he not suffer your foot to slip... The LORD is your guardian... beside you at your right hand... God will guard your life, your coming and going, both now and forever.*” Keep the faith.

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Oct 17: *“Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God”* (Lk 12:13-21). **Reflection/Provision:** Two questions to consider: What do we “treasure?” Jesus speaks of possessions and greed, but there are things other than materials goods or wealth we might treasure. St. Ignatius of Loyola calls them “inordinate attachments”: things such as control or power or religious scrupulosity. Second question: What matters to God? *“In the twilight of life, God will not judge us on our earthly possessions and human successes, but on how well we have loved”* (St. John of the Cross).

Tue, Oct 18: *“Alexander the coppersmith did me a great deal of harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. You too be on guard against him, for he has strongly resisted our preaching”* (2 Tm 4:10-17). Who is this Alexander guy? Scholars suggest he is likely the same Alexander mentioned in Acts 19 who tries to calm the riot of silversmiths. He may also be the person Paul refers to in the First Letter to Timothy (1:20). It appears he was, at first, attracted to Paul’s preaching, only to do “a 180” and come out attacking Paul and his disciples. Why? **Reflection/Provision:** Again, scholars suggest financial or peer pressure as the reason for Alexander’s about-face. “This Jesus is all well and good until he starts impacting my wallet and social standing. I’m fine with attending church services and participating as long as it doesn’t change my life.” Sound familiar? It did for me for many years. Spend time *nonjudgmentally* looking at your life. Give thanks for the parts of your life in which faith guides your actions. Consider ways you might incorporate that same faith into to areas that are more challenging.

Wed, Oct 19: *“God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. With joy you will draw water at the fountain of salvation”* (Is 12:2-60). **Reflection/Provision:** In this short passage we hear of a God who, present, past, and future, is our strength and courage. Just as God has been and indeed, still is our savior, we are joyful, confident we will continue to draw our strength from this same fountain of salvation. *“As it was in the beginning, is now, and evermore shall be. Amen.”* Keep the faith.

Thu, Oct 20: *“Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided”* (Lk 12:49-53). Jesus is talking about the divisions that will develop within families due to his message. At that time, Jewish legal purity was paramount. Interfaith marital relationships would result, if not in physical death, then in expulsion from the family; this still exists in some cultures today. In the West, though, the newest hot button is not about religion, race, or even sexual identity, but political affiliation. **Reflection/Provision:** Do an internet search on “marriage outside political parties” to see several studies that point to this phenomenon. We hear stories of families torn apart by politics. I believe God, who is Love, recoils at the thought of human constructs standing in the way of Love. See Monday’s quote: How well do we love, especially those whose lives and opinions are different from ours?

Fri, Oct 21: *“I urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace”* (Eph 4: 1-6). The Church in Ephesus is a small community. Paul encourages them to work together peacefully, unified in the face of persecution and oppression. Today, people of faith and goodwill are still called to work together in peace, unified against persecution and oppression of all people. **Reflection/Provision:** A good follow-up from yesterday. The call we receive as Christians is to unite in the Spirit through peace, not to chop things up even further based on disagreements that are not of God. We are challenged to live in a manner worthy of this call. Look for opportunities today to preserve unity through peace.

Sat, Oct 22: *“Until we attain to the unity of faith...to mature manhood, so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery”* (Eph 4:7-16). **Reflection/Provision:** The topic of spiritual maturity is pertinent to our world today. In Wednesday’s gospel, Jesus tells us that much will be required of the person entrusted with much. Some choose to remain “infants, tossed by the waves,” hoping, perhaps unconsciously, that if they remain immature in faith, nothing will be required of them. When Jesus tells us to come to God as children, he does not imply ignorance or immaturity; he means we are to trust in God. Reflecting on the maturity of our faith is a tough assignment, but essential in we want a secure trust in God that can persevere in the face of trickery, scheming, and yes, even an apocalypse! Consider preparing for Advent by considering and praying about your own spiritual maturity.