

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time “C” Cycle October 16, 2016

The title *Doctor of the Church* is reserved for those who by their holy lives and teachings have inspired many to live a deeper life of faith. In this sense the word doctor means teacher. One of the four women saints who have received the title Doctor of the Church is the saint whose feast we celebrated last week, Teresa of Avila.

There is a story told about Teresa who was traveling with some of the nuns in her convent in a donkey driven cart. They were attempting to cross a storm-swollen stream. Their donkey balked and Teresa ended up drenched and covered with mud. In exasperation, looking to heaven, she blurted out a rather irreverent prayer: “God, if this is the way you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few of them!”

For Teresa, God wasn’t a remote, distant being, but an everyday friend. She was on very familiar terms with the Lord in her deep prayer and spiritual life and could talk to him about every aspect of her life. Prayer is the theme which today’s Scriptures highlight, especially regular and persistent prayer.

The Old Testament reading, from the Book of Exodus, tells about God’s people engaged in battle with their enemies. Their leader Moses raised his hands in prayer asking God’s assistance. Because the battle raged for hours, Moses was aided by others who supported his raised hands and joined in the prayer.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the beleaguered widow’s persistence in seeking justice from a dishonest judge. Saint Luke states that Jesus gave this parable to teach the necessity of his disciples to pray always without becoming weary.

Our prayer should be driven by our reading and reflection on the Holy Scriptures as Saint Paul teaches in our second reading from his second letter to his co-worker Timothy.

Prayer, of course, is the lifeline we have with God. As in all relationships, it is a two way process. The Lord speaks to us in the words of Scripture, in the teaching and tradition of the Church, in the people we interact with daily. We need to be attentive.

Prayer also needs us to express ourselves to the Lord. We can use the prayers we learned from childhood, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, etc. We can also use our own words telling the Lord our triumphs, our failings, our hopes, disappointments, our needs, the needs of others, the needs of the Church, the needs of our nation and the world. We can be as frank as Saint Teresa of Avila.

We may be tempted to think that God knows what we need. He certainly does, but he wants us to be in touch with him by prayer because it benefits us. Regular daily prayer, even for a few minutes, has benefits other than the spiritual. Studies indicate that regular prayer calms us, lowers blood pressure, and keeps us emotionally stable.

May I conclude with exemplary advice from Saint Teresa:

**Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.**

