

## 102107 29<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN OT

Peace be with you. Last week, the Readings were especially oriented to reminding us to be grateful. Do you remember last week when the foreigner Naaman was so grateful after being cured of leprosy... he wanted to take home two loads of Israelite soil so this high ranking officer could worship on the very same ground as the chosen people of God? The message of last weekend was to pray – and then give thanks. And so today, I give thanks to Almighty God for the gifts of faith and the Holy Eucharist, and a voice (that is healing) so that I may speak as His servant deacon. I give thanks to God for Archbishop Chaput; thanks for his spiritual love and leadership and his firm hand upon the rudder of this Diocese of the Catholic Church. I thank Father Gregory -- in so many ways, an answer to the prayers of many parishioners. May God richly reward you, and thank you for all you have done. Thank God for all of the holy priests and deacons and others that have helped to lift my faith. And finally, I thank God for you dear parishioners and friends— you too have helped keep me in prayer and in faith... some of you have trusted me with secrets and moments that tell of the brokenness of mankind... you have also shared with me moments of God's forgiveness and healing. You've shared touching moments... being involved in preparation for, or actually performing marriage ceremonies or the baptism of your children. I have often experienced a heavy heart as I participated in the funeral liturgies of your loved ones – but always wishing to remind you of the Resurrection awaiting us all. Last but not least – I thank God for you Dee, my wife and companion.

Who but the Lord would have ever thought such as this could be possible given the crooked lines we've been on in our past?

Well, now I need to watch the time. Because I recall that it was Mark Twain who said that few people are saved after the first ten minutes of a sermon. So let us move on, selecting just one topic from today's readings. The topic is prayer.... The power of prayer; the call... the privilege for us to be involved in helping others with our intercessory prayer... Jesus told his disciples (that means us) to pray always without becoming weary. Do you believe in the power of prayer? Do you really believe in the power of your own prayer? Please believe.

My dear widowed mom, may God rest her soul – she was a prayer warrior of the first order. She prayed for years -- for decades for my brother and me, and for my return to the Church. She probably asked the Lord to let me become a member of the clergy – perhaps even a priest or a bishop. In God's ways and in God's time – do you think my mom's prayers were answered?

Let me share a few prayer experiences. A deacon friend told me about a powerful retreat and conference in Steubenville, Ohio at Franciscan University. I first went there in June of 2005 and I've gone for three years. Some of you have heard me say that these conferences for priests and deacons are so powerful.... so uplifting. This has become a special Vitamin R for me. Vitamin R equals RENEWAL! And I look forward to going each year.

And I've talked glowingly about it to Dee. I've said to her: 'to be with 200 to 300 priests and deacons – all with their hands raised.... singing and in prayer is so uplifting. And the Steubenville music is awesome. So, this past June, we made plans for Dee to go to the conference. The last night – Thursday night is open to the community at large. I flew out on Monday Morning -- and, early on a Thursday morning this past June, Dee left and she became held up in traffic. And then a railroad train blocked her roadway. A much longer story shortened – she

missed her plane. And she cried as she left a cell phone message for me: "I'm on standby for another flight but it is overbooked." So what do you think that I would do? I went around to various priests and deacons at Franciscan University, explaining what had happened. I didn't know them; I just asked them to pray for my wife who was delayed.

The Thursday evening session started at 7pm – and at about 10 minutes before 7:00 – I stood outside, in prayer. Dee came walking over a rise and headed down to the field house auditorium. We hugged emotionally, and then we went inside to sing and pray in thanksgiving. The Lord put this on my heart.... "Did you doubt that I would help?" And at breakfast the next morning, a priest came over to our table. Dee was sitting with me, and the priest asked, "Is this your wife – the one we were praying for yesterday?" "Yes Father – thank you and thanks to all priests and deacons – it worked out fine." There may have been some evil force trying to keep it from happening. But in His goodness, the Lord heard these prayers.

This reminds me of another recent experience. Two Saturdays ago, I went to a special prayer meeting down in the Denver area. A former Colorado State Patrolman by the name of Jim S..... got up to tell his story. At the beginning of his narration, Officer Jim said that he used to be a one-hour-a-week Catholic. (Those are his words.) And that was the extent of his faith. That is – until he came down with stage three Parkinson's disease. Now, in the guided ways of the Almighty, Jim bumped into another Colorado State Patrolman and his wife – both of whom were retired. That couple is part of a very active, Catholic prayer team in Greeley. And they and some other folks asked if they could pray over Jim. And so, Patrolman Jim S..... told us that he is cured. It wasn't instantaneous – and all the symptoms didn't leave in a flash. But the neurologist doctor said it sure looked like a miracle to him. Jim told me he would try to come to Mass here

sometime this weekend. I don't know if he is present but if you are interested – you can talk to Jim -- I believe he will gladly tell you what the Lord is doing in his life. What I heard a couple weekends ago is this: Jim believes in prayer. And now, Jim like Naaman gives thanks. Do you believe?

Let me tell you one more story. There is a singer – a Catholic Christian musician who lives down in Phoenix. Her name is Julie Kerrick and she has a website and you can email her if you wish. I've been in touch with her and this is her story. About eight years ago, things began to fall apart for this singer/songwriter. Julie began to experience the powerless of trying to be in control of her life.

First – her teenaged daughter was raped – a brutal attack which left her daughter pregnant. Problems? To have the baby or not have it? Would the daughter be able to ever look at the child without seeing the face of her attacker? About the time that Julie's family was going through this experience, her husband Kurt struck up a relationship on the Internet with an old friend. The relationship turned romantic – and then.... husband Kurt came to Julie and announced he was going to end their 20 some year marriage... leaving Julie for another woman.

Are you with me so far? Cause here's where this story takes a very powerful turn. Half way around the world, at a radio station in Italy that broadcasts Christian music throughout much of Europe, an engineer happened upon a CD of Julie Kerrick's music. He had never heard of her – didn't understand many words of her songs. But the engineer played this CD over and over. And the more he played it – the more he developed a sense – a premonition that this singer had some serious problems. So the radio engineer started to pray for this female singer. In fact – he spread the word through Catholic affiliate radio stations and in other places – telling people that he was convinced this unknown woman

REALLY needed prayer. Literally hundreds of people started praying for the intentions of a woman they had never met. As strange as this may sound to 'one hour a week' Christians like the Colorado Highway patrolman, these people all continued to pray... and pray. And this went on for quite a while. Now, coincidentally, it came to be the very day that Julie's husband arrived into their home to pack his bags – he was leaving.

He was on his way out the door when a voice said out loud to him. "Kurt – where are you going? This is your home. This is your family and life." He stopped and turned. He knew it wasn't Julie's voice. Kurt came back into the room where his wife was, and he begged her to forgive him. They began a lengthy process of reconciliation and healing. Now, more time passes, and one day, the phone rings at Kerrick Music Ministries in Phoenix. In broken English, a man from Italy is on the phone. And he told the story of people being in prayer for the woman singer named Julie Kerrick. The Italian engineer wanted to know how Julie was? Had her unknown problems been resolved? Yes... Yes! Yes, the marriage was renewed and healing. Yes the daughter had delivered the baby – there had never been a thought of ending the pregnancy. And yes, the Kerrick's were now doing marriage repair workshops to help other couples. And they have since become involved in traveling the country promoting prayer and music.

"Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Prayer works my dear friends. Not the one time, 'well it didn't work' sort of prayer, but repetitive, insistent, faith-filled prayers like the widow in today's Gospel. Prayer can work in your life – and it works all the way around the world. And if any of you happens to go to your reward and you meet my mother – perhaps the two of you can pray for me. Pray for me – to be a good deacon. Or perhaps a bishop. Bishop Tom

from Payson, AZ – it has a nice ring doesn't it? Oh – and rest assured, my wife and I will be in prayer for you.

## **Reading 1**

Ex 17:8-13

In those days, Amalek came and waged war against Israel.

Moses, therefore, said to Joshua, "Pick out certain men, 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."

So Joshua did as Moses told him: he engaged Amalek in battle after Moses had climbed to the top of the hill with Aaron and Hur.

As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight. 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. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

Ps 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

R. (cf. 2) Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

I lift up my eyes toward the mountains; whence shall help come to me? My help is from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

R. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

May he not suffer your foot to slip; may he slumber not who guards you: indeed

he neither slumbers nor sleeps, the guardian of Israel.

R. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade; he is beside you at your right hand. The sun shall not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

R. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

The LORD will guard you from all evil; he will guard your life.

The LORD will guard your coming and your going, both now and forever.

R. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

## **Reading II**

2 Tm 3:14-4:2

Beloved:

Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, and that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.

## **Gospel**

Lk 18:1-8

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being.

And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"