

PRAY ALWAYS AND DO NOT LOSE HEART
29th Sunday Ordinary Time Year C, 20th October 2019

WHAT AN OPENING LINE

What an opening line from today's Gospel!!!

'Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.'

Let us express to God *our need to pray always.*

Let us express to God *our need not to lose heart.*

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH



Prophet Jeremiah by Michelangelo

We know from the prophet *Jeremiah* in the Old Testament, that during his long ministry, Jeremiah was tempted at times to lose heart. He would pray about it and pray through it.

He dialogued with God about his fears, frustrations and lack of clear vision at times.

He put before God in prayer, his questions and uncertainties.

He could feel sorry for himself, and feel moments of depression, and prayed about it to God.

When feeling so low and pondering whether to give up, he admits:

'If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more his name", then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.'

Each time, God listened to him, and showed him a way forward.

Jeremiah realized God's call to him was so deep that he described it as in his bones.

He came to realise that, if he tried to suppress the burning fire of God's call, it would weary him.

How much energy at times do we waste by trying to suppress God's call in our lives?

SOME OF OUR PRAYERS

We have so much to pray for at present, including

- Our daily call to love God and to love our neighbour
- The Amazon Synod which has concluded two weeks on listening and discussion, and now moves into its third and final week.
In what way will it influence us in Australia?
- The plight of people in northern Syria.
We pray for parish members here who have family and friends over there.
- The ongoing royal commission into aged care in Australia.
- The drought in Australia and communal consultations for long-term planning.

- A spirituality that includes accountability and transparency in our stewardship of our common home – the earth.
- The right to live now and to protect the right to life.
- Hard economic times for some in our community.
- Ongoing mission to challenge injustice and abuse in its many forms.
- Our national church preparations for the Plenary Council and where the Holy Spirit is calling us.
- The joy of serving Jesus.

SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

The reading from the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy, Chapter 3:16, tells us today that,
*“All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error,
 for guiding people’s lives and teaching them to be upright”*. (New JB version)

Over the next two weekends, Luke’s Gospel looks at some aspects of prayer.
*As we ponder Luke’s Gospel, how will our understanding of prayer change and guide us?
 How will it release our energy and lead us to rejoice?*

UNFOLDING SOME OF THE PRAYERFUL INSIGHTS IN LUKE’S GOSPEL

Three years ago in our parish, we reflected on prayer in Luke.
 Once more, we seek out the meaning of constant prayer.

There are so many healing passages that guide us.
 There are also other passages from which we draw strength.
 A few such references are below.

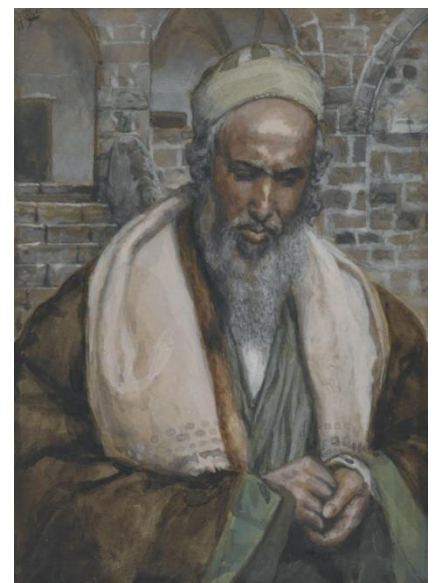
LUKE’S GOSPEL – BY CHAPTER

CHAPTERS 1 & 2: In the Infancy Narrative we hear: of **Mary** trusting in God and responding
‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour’
 Luke 1:47-55
 of **Zachariah** who is *‘Filled with the Holy Spirit’* Luke 1:68-79,
 and speaks of the experience of God upon us in mercy, light and
 peace:

*‘by the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high, will
 break upon us,
 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of
 death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.’*

of the prayer of the **Angels** *“praising God and saying
 ” Glory to God in the highest heaven,
 and on earth peace among those whom he favours.”* Luke 2:13-14
 and of **Simeon** who knows that God has both heard his prayer and
 kept his word to him.

He prayed and
*‘praised God, saying Master, now you are dismissing your
 servant in peace, according to your word’*. Luke 2:29-32



Saint Luke by James Tissot

CHAPTER 3: We hear that Jesus continues to pray after being baptised.
Luke 3:21-22 *'and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven opened up and the Holy spirit descended upon him'*

CHAPTER 4: We draw strength from how Jesus faced temptations in life.
We pray over the wilderness temptations that Jesus faced and overcame.

Do we drift through life?

Or do we have a mission as we ponder Jesus revealing his mission to the people at Nazara?

Luke 4:18 *'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor'*

We pause to write down a brief description of our mission.

[pause]

CHAPTER 5: *Do we take our opportunities to trust God and 'put out our nets into the deep water'?*

Simon could easily think of reasons why he shouldn't, yet he listened to Jesus and responded, *'Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.'*

CHAPTER 6: We learn from Jesus how important it is to spend time in prayer, before making important decisions in our lives.

Jesus spends the whole night in prayer before choosing the Apostles.

Luke 6:12 *'Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God'*

CHAPTER 7: Jesus faced criticism and spiteful comments.

Do we pray about such things when we experience such hurts?

Through our prayer, in what ways do we become more loving, like the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus?

Jesus says of her, *'Hence she has shown great love.'*

CHAPTER 8: We hear of some of the faithful companions of Jesus, such as Mary of Magdala, Joanna and Susanna.

They can inspire us to be companions to God in prayer and inspire us to thank God for our own companions.

We hear the parable of the sower and the seed and where the seeds fall.

We pray about where the Good News of Jesus finds rich soil within us.

The disciples in the boat pleaded to Jesus during the storm and Jesus brought calm.

In the storms that we experience in life, we pray to God about our fears and concerns and pray for the gift of calmness.

CHAPTER 9: Jesus spends time in prayer before his teaching moment with the disciples.

Sometimes, in company with others, we are in joint prayer to God.

Jesus clarifies our thinking, our priorities and our mission, by asking two questions.

'Who do the crowds say that I am?' 'But who do you say that I am?'

Jesus outlines of his passion leading to the cross.

What is the cross we bear and how do we pray about it?

In our lives, we carry the cross prayerfully.

Later in **CHAPTER 9**, Jesus is transfigured in prayer while on the mountain.

The voice from above, tells us to recognize Jesus and to listen to him.

'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him.'

Once more we are called to be humble and welcoming

as Jesus places a little child before the adults and says:

***'Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me,
and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me'***

How do we welcome Jesus into our prayer and into our love of neighbour?

Later again in **CHAPTER 9** Jesus rebukes James and John who display an angry attitude to the Samaritans.

We place the storm of our anger before God in prayer, inviting God to calm us.

CHAPTER 10: Jesus thanks the Father.

We see how blessed we are.

We hear that after the return of the seventy disciples

from their brief missionary experience, Jesus debriefs them. We hear that:

'At the same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit' and thanked the Father.

In prayer, we open ourselves to Jesus debriefing us,

and to Jesus rejoicing in the Holy Spirit.

After completing the debrief, in answer to a question by a lawyer about eternal life,

Jesus highlights the need to be active and compassionate and inclusive

in the ***Parable of the Good Samaritan***.

And Jesus highlights the time to sit at his feet in prayerful attention,

in the meeting with Mary and Martha.

May we sit at the feet of Jesus in prayerful attention each day.

CHAPTER 11: Jesus teaches people how to pray.

Then he invites us to ask, to knock and to search.

Jesus says, ***"More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it"***.

CHAPTER 12: We are promised that, as we face trials for our faith, the Holy Spirit will teach us what to say.

Jesus asks where our treasure is.

What does our prayer tell us about our treasure?

Jesus points to God's care of the birds and flowers as he implores us not to be dominated by our anxieties. In praying and living our faith Jesus says,

***"to set your hearts on his kingdom,
and these other things will be given you as well."***

***"There is no need to be afraid, little flock,
for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom."***

CHAPTER 13: The kingdom of God is compared to the mustard seed that grows into a tree, and to yeast that leavens, and ponder how we pray to God, that we may grow in faith.

CHAPTER 14: We are reminded that we must be humble.

We hear about planning and commitment. To be salt.

Luke 14:11 ***“For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted”***

CHAPTER 15: We ponder the *Mercy Parables* –

Of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father and two sons and servants.

Each time we are invited to rejoice in the finding of the lost.

Luke 15:6 *‘... ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost’*

Luke 15:9 *‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost’.*

Luke 15:32 *‘But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’*

CHAPTER 16: We can’t serve both God and wealth.

Our desire should not be to idolize wealth.

The *Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus* challenges the way we live and pray.

CHAPTER 17: only one of ten healed returns to give thanks.

How often do we return to give thanks to God through prayer?

We pray that our service be humble.

We ponder in prayer what Jesus means when he says,

“the kingdom of God is among you”.

All the points above are only some examples.

The 17 previous chapters have many other teachings, healings and encounters.

TODAY’S GOSPEL OF LUKE 18;1-8

CHAPTER 18 begins with the words:

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.”

Humility is so important, as we hear from Jesus:

Luke 18:17 ***‘Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’***

The parable in Luke 18:1-8 is about an unjust, unrighteous judge who is only interested in himself.

He is not a role model.

He does not respect God and does not respect others.

The other character in the story is a widow seeking justice.

She is persistent and perseveres in asking for justice for herself.

She just keeps coming.

The English translation can raise some interesting questions.

The *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* says 'always'

The *New Jerusalem Bible (New JB)* version translated the Greek word 'pantote' (Gk. πάντοτε) as 'continually'.

Is there a difference for you between praying always and praying continually?

The NRSV version translates the response of the unjust, selfish judge in verse 5,

"yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming".

The New JB translation says, *"I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face".*

The Greek word 'hypopiazein' is also a boxing term for giving a black eye.

Whether the unjust judge gives in because of his concern of being worn out or the threat of receiving a black eye, he gives in.

How does the unjust judge and the widow compare to God and ourselves?

God is not like the unrighteous and unjust judge.

God is loving and hears our prayers.

The widow perseveres. **We too must persevere.**

But prayer is more than just claiming our rights.

Jesus finishes the story with a question about faith.

As Jesus listens to our prayer, does he find faith within us?

Verse 8, **"And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth".**

This passage next week will lead to the *parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector*, where Jesus will challenge us about what type of faith we have - *what type of prayer?*

How does our perseverance in prayer lead us to become real witnesses of God's love and Good News?

How have we changed through our prayer to God?

How have we become more loving, more sensitive to the needs of others?

Is our prayer still about us?

Or is it about God and ourselves and others?

Next week Jesus shows us, in the *Pharisee and Tax Collector* parable, the difference between praying as an egotist and praying as a humble person.

Let us live in continual prayer, always in prayer.
Amen.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/102019.cfm>]

