

29th Sunday per Annum - C
Exodus 17:8-18;
II Timothy 3:14-4:2;
Luke 18:1-18
Little Flower - 10/20/19

My Brothers and Sisters,

Although we know that our God is a God of mercy and compassion, Scripture also teaches that we are accountable to God for our lives. This will become ever more clear in our readings as we draw closer to the end of the Church year.

There are three challenging verses in the Bible that I think about quite often. Each of these three verses is directed at us not just as individuals but at us as a community, as the people of God. The first of these verses is the final verse of today's Gospel. Jesus ended today's parable with a question, "*But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*" Today's reading from Paul to Timothy suggests that Jesus is not simply referring to belief but to fidelity or faithfulness. Paul challenges us, "*Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed.*" In other words, we are not only called to believe in Jesus, but we are also called to live our relationship with Jesus.

We would be missing the point if we start questioning the faith of others or even the faith of the Church or the faith of our society. We each need to question our own faith. Do I really put God first in my life? Where does God fit into my priorities? Am I willing to entrust my life and my future to God and Jesus? Does what I say I believe impact my life? Do I have a personal relationship with God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? Do I practice and live my faith? These are the questions we should all be asking ourselves.

The second verse is found in Matthew's Gospel. Talking about the end times, Jesus said, "*...because of the increase of evildoing, the love of many will grow cold*" [24:12]. In the book of Revelation, Jesus had St. John write to the angel of the church of Ephesus, "*Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first*" [2:4]. We might all ask ourselves to what extent our love for God and our love for others has grown tepid or cold. God wants us to have a passionate love for him and for others. To keep our relationship with God and our relationships with others alive and passionate, we have to work at them and nurture them. If we neglect them, our love will grow cold.

Finally, the third passage we heard a few weeks ago. Jesus said, "*And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where (you) are from.'*" [Lk. 13:26-27a]. Because we are part of the parish, because we come to Mass, because we are believers, because we try to live a good life, all of us who are here believe that we are reasonably good Christians and Catholics. From our perspective, Jesus and church are part of our lives. However, does Jesus really know us?

Today's readings emphasize the importance of prayer, Scripture, and perseverance in our relationship with God. Both today's reading from Exodus and today's Gospel assure us that God hears and answers our prayers, especially our prayers for justice. As long as Moses kept his arms raised, the battle went well for the Israelites. In today's Gospel, Jesus told a parable about the necessity to pray always without growing weary. In today's second reading, Paul reminds us of the importance of Scripture in our faith.

My brothers and sisters, I would suggest that we all think about the three verses this week. You might think about asking yourselves the questions I ask myself. Do I really put God first in my life? Has my love for God and others grown tepid or cold? If Jesus were to return today, would he say that he knows me? Finally, today is World Mission Sunday. As Pope Francis consistently reminds us, the Church is called to be a missionary Church, and we are called to be missionary disciples. Is Little Flower a missionary parish? Are we missionary disciples?