

My Brothers and Sisters,

Most, if not all, of us want to be true to ourselves. We are familiar with the famous lines from Shakespeare: “to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man” [Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 3]. In last Sunday’s second reading, St. Paul wrote, “*If we are unfaithful he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself*” [2 Tim. 2:13]. Although I did not mention this verse in last Sunday’s homily, it has been on my mind all week.

In this verse, Paul reminds us that even if we are unfaithful to God and to others, Jesus always remains faithful to us because if he were not faithful to God and to us, he would not be true to himself. This verse continues a major theme from the Old Testament. Using marriage imagery, the prophets often referred to God as faithful to his Covenant with Israel and to Israel as unfaithful in their covenant with God.

I sometimes think fidelity is a forgotten virtue today. We know that there is a lot of sexual infidelity in marriage. However, I think fidelity in marriage means more than sexual fidelity. Faithfulness in marriage requires couples to choose and re-choose each other, to choose and re-choose their relationship. This implies not taking each other or their relationship for granted. This implies putting energy and effort into making the marriage better.

In today’s second reading, Paul wrote, “*Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed.*” It seems to me that we are called to be faithful to the commitments we have made to God and to others. When we keep our commitments to God and others, we are true to ourselves, i.e., true to our best selves. When we keep our commitments to God and others, we develop character. The truth is today many people have a difficult time making or keeping commitments of any kind.

In today’s first reading, when Moses became weary of holding his hands up, the battle turned against the Israelites. Therefore, they put a rock in place for him to sit, and Aaron and Hur held up his arms. The Israelites won the battle.

A second theme today is prayer. In today’s Gospel, “*Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.*” The parable seems to suggest that persistence in prayer pays off. Unfortunately, this can lead to the incorrect conclusion that when we pray persistently, we are talking God into doing what he does not want to do.

When Jesus talks about praying always, he is not just talking about the prayers we say. I think he is suggesting that we make our life a prayer. We do this every day by offering our “prayers, works, joys, and sufferings” to Jesus [Morning Offering].

Today’s second reading also stresses the importance of Scripture: “*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.*” Although most of us who are older did not grow up reading the Bible, reading the Bible daily can feed our prayer lives and empower us to make a difference in the world.

My brothers and sisters, the final words of today’s Gospel are a challenge to us: “*‘But when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?’*” This question can be interpreted in at least two ways. The first way of reading the question asks if Jesus will find believers when he returns. Today this is a valid question. Every survey and study suggests that fewer and fewer people in the United States believe in God or believe in Christ or actively practice their Christian faith. The second way of reading the question asks if he will find faithfulness on earth. Will he find people making and keeping commitments to God and others?