

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 147

Reading 1 - [Exodus 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 - [Psalm 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8](#) R.(cf. 2) Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Reading 2 - [2 Timothy 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 - [Luke 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?"

When Jesus comes again will there be faith on earth: depends, are you *‘Immersed in Scripture and Persistent in Prayer’?*

Now, in some ways, scripture is the easier one of the two. It's a book, you read it, you come to mass daily or weekly, and you're immersed in scripture, right? The first half of Mass is all scripture and the second half, the liturgy of the Eucharist is either quoting scripture, paraphrasing scripture, or rooted in scripture. You cannot come to mass and not engage with the scriptures unless you're thinking about what's for lunch. Of course, just hearing scripture spoken in your hearing or, just reading it like any other book you won't get the full effect that God desires for you. Scripture is best understood and engaged¹ in these ways:

1. The Centrality of God's Word in the Church

- The Church venerates Sacred Scripture as it does the body of Christ, especially in the liturgy.
- There is a close link between the proclamation of God's Word and the Eucharist.
- Church history shows renewal often comes from returning to the primacy of the Gospel (e.g., St. Francis, St. Dominic, Charles Borromeo).
- The Second Vatican Council emphasized the importance of God's Word, especially in the life and mission of bishops and priests.
- Recent popes have continually placed evangelization and the proclamation of the Gospel at the center of Church life.
- Sacred Scripture is vital for ecumenical unity among Christians.

2. Understanding and Interpreting Sacred Scripture

- The Catholic Church's approach is rooted in "Dei Verbum²," which highlights two tensions:
 - Historical exegesis (understanding the human context and intent of biblical writers).
 - Interpretation in the spirit of the Church (reading Scripture within the Church's living tradition).
- Both historical-critical and theological/canonical methods are necessary and complementary.
- Over-reliance on historical-critical methods risks reducing Scripture to a mere historical document.

3. Sacred Scripture and the Church

- The Bible is a product of Church tradition and cannot be separated from it.
- The formation of the biblical canon was an intentional act of the early Church to preserve unity of faith.
- Sacred Scripture is interpreted within the context of Church tradition, liturgy, and apostolic succession.
- The magisterium (teaching office) ensures the integrity of Scripture and its interpretation in service to the Church's faith.
- There is a close connection between Scripture, tradition, and the Church; they are interdependent.

4. The Word of God as Person, Tradition, and Scripture

- The Catholic view sees the Word of God primarily as a person: Jesus Christ, not just a written text.
- Revelation is a personal, historical, and communal event, not merely a set of truths.
- Scripture and tradition are vehicles of revelation, which flows from God's self-communication.
- Christianity is centered on a relationship with Jesus, the living Word, rather than being a "book religion."

5. Living with Sacred Scripture

- Knowing Christ requires familiarity with Scripture; "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."
- The way one approaches the Bible determines what one finds in it.
- Hearing and acting on God's Word is the basis for communion with Christ and the Church.
- Mary is presented as the archetype of openness to God's Word, pondering and receiving it in her heart.
- John the Baptist is the "voice" that communicates the Word, illustrating the Church's role in proclaiming God's Word.
- All Christians are called to be credible voices for God's Word by being at home in Scripture.

¹<https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/fr/cardinal-koch/2018/conferenze/2018-10-30-bible-engagement-in-the-catholic-church-tradition-1.html>

² https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html

Spiritual reading of Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, is an important form of meditation. This spiritual reading is traditionally called *lectio divina* or divine reading. *Lectio divina* is prayer over the Scriptures.³

- **The first element of this type of prayer is reading (*lectio*):** you take a short passage from the Bible, preferably a Gospel passage and read it carefully, perhaps three or more times. Let it really soak-in.
- **The second element is meditation (*meditatio*).** By using your imagination enter into the Biblical scene in order to "see" the setting, the people, and the unfolding action. It is through this meditation that you encounter the text and discover its meaning for your life.
- **The next element is prayer (*oratio*)** or your personal response to the text: asking for graces, offering praise or thanksgiving, seeking healing or forgiveness. In this prayerful engagement with the text, you open yourself up to the possibility of contemplation.
- **Contemplation (*contemplatio*)** is a gaze turned toward Christ and the things of God. By God's action of grace, you may be raised above meditation to a state of seeing or experiencing the text as mystery and reality. In contemplation, you come into an experiential contact with the One behind and beyond the text.

Lectio Divina is an essential type of prayer for engaging with scripture but is also useful as an approach to reading and praying with other literary sources, holy icons, and liturgical texts of the Christian tradition. It is properly understood as meditational prayer, a Christian practice of prayer dating back to the early Church. As the Catechism states: "*Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking.*" And that, "*To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"*"⁴

Meditation is of course not the only method of praying. We also have these that you might want to investigate more and consider putting into practice in your own prayer life.

- Devotional Prayer such as Novenas and [The Rosary](#): This popular devotional prayer invites us to meditate on the saving mysteries of Jesus' life and the faithful witness of Mary, our Mother in faith.
- [Centering Prayer](#): We focus silently on a sacred word that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us. This is intimately connected but not limited to Lectio Divina.
- [Ignatian Contemplation](#): We use our imagination to place ourselves in a scene from Scripture using all our senses and take notice of how God may be speaking to us.
- [The Ignatian Examen](#): An opportunity for us to prayerfully review our day in the presence of God.

But we're getting a bit ahead of ourselves. Let's first understand what prayer is and some basics of praying. Prayer is, objectively speaking, not difficult. However, prayer always seems to be tricky business for people. Some of us struggle with praying because of the obstacles within. We might feel nervous, filled with doubts and questions such as, "*Am I doing this right?*" "*Does God really care about what I have to share?*" When we are struggling against the various thoughts and feelings that make praying seem difficult, it is important to remind ourselves of what we believe, the truths we know. That God does in fact love us and desires us to be holy; therefore, God does in fact listen to us and desires to be known by us in relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A conversation isn't a good one if it's one sided.

We know that we ought to pray at particular times of the day such as before meals. That I should pray at least once a day. I should pray before I go to bed or I should pray when I get up. Although we might struggle with 'feeling like praying' or praying in a way that feels meaningful, if we rely on the prayers that the Church

³ <https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide>

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2705-2706

provides for us, we can say that praying doesn't need be so much of a struggle. We have the simple prayer of grace before meals we may have learned as a child which never fails. We have the Lord's Prayer; the one prayer Jesus gave us. As well we have the rosary, novenas, devotional prayers, Chaplet of St. Joseph, Chaplet of St. Michael, etc., etc., etc. Maybe some people pray the prayer of the church, the liturgy of the hours. And of course, we all gather to offer the highest prayer in the sacrifice of the mass together. We come together as a family and pray together, listen together, learn together, worship God together. In these ways prayer isn't much of struggle itself, rather making time for prayer seems to be the struggle we share.

As useful as the prayers offered to us by the Church, we must not lose sight of the fact that prayer is a conversation with God. Even these 'rote' prayers are, at their core, conversation with God. Knowing this, and using our human experience in relationship with others, we can utilize those dynamics in our conversations with God, remembering that prayer should also include both speaking *and* listening. This may seem obvious, but how often do we forget it! How often do I jump into prayer just to list all the intentions I have and the people I want to pray for, and then I end with a sign of the cross and move on! Prayer involves having the courage to listen. Listening means allowing God space to speak to us in the various forms of the quiet of prayer, and then as our disposition of persistence in prayer allows, we continue listening for answers to our prayers which may arise later in reflection on our own deep desires, through the Scripture, or through the words of someone meaningful in our lives.

This leads us to reflect more in depth on prayer as it's presented in the second main theme of this weekend's scripture readings. Throughout the Old and the New Testament, scripture speaks of persistence in prayer. Persistence in prayer, we often take that to mean don't give up in the sense that we need to constantly hammer at God to get what we want. If I pray hard enough, if I pray the right way, God will give me what I want, if I'm just like that old woman. That's not really what's going on.

If there's to be faith on earth when Christ comes back, we need to be immersed in scripture and persistent in prayer. Developing a disposition of persistent prayerfulness, for most of us, is more of a struggle than praying in particular ways at particular moments of the day. All the issues of prayer and praying that are part of the above forms, can blind us to the necessity of growing into prayerful contemplation which is at the heart of the disposition of persistent prayerfulness. This blindness usually arises from a misunderstanding of what it means to pray persistently. Persistently praying is having the habit of praying in the various ways touched on above. However, a disposition of persistent prayerfulness has to do with my state of being, my fundamental disposition as I go through my day, both waking and sleeping so that I am in mind, body and soul literally persisting in prayerful state all the time.

This takes growth. For most of us, it doesn't happen right away, and for those of us who rely solely on the devotional prayers given us by the church, we will likely not find the richness of being persistently prayerful, nor will we be consoled in daily life by awareness of God's abiding presence. What I mean by a disposition of persistence in prayer is that as I go through my day, I am constantly aware of the abiding presence of God and my soul is praying persistently, let's say, like an App running in the background. For example, as I drive across the city and am challenged by various people's driving habits, I have two choices. If my disposition is about control and anger, my agenda and I'm running late, etc., etc., selfishly minded, then I'm going to find myself screaming in the car at the other driver who can't hear me or, you know, offering some kind of physical sign of my unhappy disposition.

On the other hand, if I'm inclined to be aware of the abiding presence of God, I'm not likely to swear, and I'll be more inclined immediately to pray because my soul will recognize the moment as perfect for intercessory prayer. No matter what's going on for everyone else on the road, everyone has something that they need God's help with. I don't need to know what that is. I don't need to know why they're driving too

slowly. Maybe they were in an accident last week. They're super cautious. I don't need to know why they're driving too fast? Maybe they just heard that their mom was in the hospital and in danger of death, so they were consumed grief and concern. God knows what people need. God calls on me to pray for other people's needs. And so, what better thing to do as I'm driving down the road than to be in that dispositional habit toward prayer, constantly aware of God's presence and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. My soul, already in a state of praying prompts me to be actively engaged in mental prayer such as Lord, protect me as I drive. Lord, make me a respecter of life while I drive. Lord, help prepare me for what I'm about to experience in my class, the people I'm going to meet, the parking space I'm going to need, please help me find it.

You're always praying in your soul as this disposition grows. Which is why it's so readily easy to pray words to intercede for others, to be thankful to God when those moments come. Whatever outside things or internal problems arise, you're already disposed to add them to your ongoing prayer as the Holy Spirit prays within you, aiding you. This can continue throughout your day. You know, the quick mindful prayer as you take your bathroom break. Lord, I'm having a tough morning. Holy Spirit I need a boost. Father, everything is going so well today. Thank you very much. Constant, you know, you're about to eat so you pray out loud. You are so aware that you don't have to fight to make time to pray. You just pause at different times and engage in the appropriate type of prayer. Maybe you step into the church for the holy hour because it's good to pray that way in in the presence of the blessed sacrament and have a holy hour in your week. Maybe you just go for a walk. And the walk isn't just psychologically rejuvenating when communing with nature. It's a spiritual experience, and not in the general sense, but as another way of praying in thanksgiving for creation of which you are a crowning part. And so, this constant state of being, is prayerful. It's persistent prayer that is sometimes vocalized, that is sometimes experienced in the prayers of the church, that is sometimes experienced in the presence of the blessed sacrament, that is sometimes experienced with others like at Mass, constantly ready, persistently praying.

I mentioned persistently prayerful day and night. While you sleep, you're disposition of persistence in prayer continues to be active. Let's say you become aware of a bad dream. Your soul is praying and continuing to be aware of the presence of God, so that you don't even really have to wake up. You just become consciously aware enough to pray mentally or audibly for God's help. And immediately you return to a peaceful sleep. Maybe you're struggling with sleep itself, so you go to sleep seeking God's peacefulness in you, seeking God's help to work out the day. Here we should note that some people have clinical difficulties that prayerfulness alone will not address. You must address those concerns with prayer as well as in concrete ways. You might go to sleep praying that the healing that happens during our sleep physiologically is fruitful and that tomorrow you wake up rejuvenated and able to cooperate with that new healthy rejuvenation that was worked out during the night physiologically. When you feel that darkness, maybe the enemy 'ish', during your sleep you become aware enough to call upon God to be able to say I reject the work of the enemy, I cast you to the foot of the cross in the name of Jesus. I am covered in the blood of Jesus. You have no power over me. And you drift back to sleep and it's peaceful. Maybe in response you begin to pray the rosary while you're sleeping and drift back in.

This is persistent prayer. A persistently prayerful disposition allows us to break free from thinking in terms of now I'm praying and now I'm not. Now I'm working, now I'm studying, now I'm playing, now I'm..., no, every minute of our day is lived in the abiding presence of God of which we ought to grow in mindfulness of and allow to fuel our disposition of prayerfulness. Then when we use words mentally or out loud, our prayers will be much more informed because we're so much more aware. This is truly the fire of faith that the Lord will be looking for when he comes back. And this persistent prayerful disposition will move us to be more sensitive to each other, to our brothers and sisters who need support. So that like Moses who had Aaron and Hur help raise his arms and remain with God in prayer, so too we have each other when we find

it difficult to maintain that disposition, when we find it dry in prayer, that we can help each other. How are you doing Bob? Pretty good. Have a little trouble praying these days. Let me pray with you. What do you need to pray for? Asking each other to pray. And in this disposition that is persistently prayerful, we will actually pray when people ask us. And sometimes we'll know this is a moment where I don't pray for their intention later. We stop right now and we pray together. I lift up their intention here and now. I pray with them when they can't pray themselves. I lift them up and altogether we're lifted up.

As this disposition of prayerfulness becomes truly integrated in us, we will hear and know the voice of God ever more clearly. We will know how, where, and when to serve each other and those in the world around us. Mindful that today is World Mission Sunday, the mission of the church. As church, we're incapable of doing anything well without that abiding presence of God, that awareness, without the immersion in scripture and this disposition of prayerfulness, persistent prayerfulness. But if this is what we're striving to be formed, By God, we will become ever more powerful in God. God will be able to use us in extraordinary and mind-blowing ways. And we will be so sensitive and so ready to hear and obey that when we do, we will run. As Mary ran in haste to Elizabeth, we will know and we will do. And we won't do because that's what we ought to do. We'll do. do because of our love for God and neighbor all of it working together.

Writing about contemplation (having a disposition of persistent prayer), Hans Urs von Balthassar said;

firstly, prayer is a conversation between God and the soul, and secondly, a particular language is spoken: God's language. Prayer is dialogue, not man's monologue before God. Ultimately, in any case, there is no such thing as solitary speech; speech implies reciprocity, the exchange of thoughts and of souls, unity in a common spirit, in a common possession and sharing of the truth. Speech both demands and manifests an I and a Thou. In prayer, moreover, man speaks to a God who has long since revealed Himself to him in a Word which is so stupendous and all-embracing that it can never be "past tense"; this Word resounds through all times as a present reality. The better a man learns to pray, the more deeply he finds that all his stammering is only an answer to God's speaking to him; this in turn implies that any understanding between God and man must be on the basis of God's language. It was God who spoke first, and it is only because God has expressed, "exteriorized". Himself in this way that man can "interiorize" himself toward God. Just think of the Our Father which we address to him every day: is not this his own word? Were we not taught it by the Son of God, who is God and the Word of God? Could any man ever have produced such language on his own initiative? Was not the Hail Mary first proclaimed by an angel's lips, i.e., in the language of heaven? And as for the words uttered by Elizabeth, "filled with the Spirit", were they not the response to her first meeting with the incarnate God? Whatever could we say to God if he himself had not taken the first step in communicating and manifesting himself to us in his word, so that we have access to him and fellowship with him? For we have been permitted to glimpse his inner nature, to enter into it, into the inner core of eternal truth; bathed in this light which radiates upon us from God, we ourselves become light and transparent before him.

All of a sudden we just know: prayer is a conversation in which God's word has the initiative and we, for the moment, can be nothing more than listeners. The essential thing is for us to hear God's word and discover from it how to respond to him. His word is the truth, opened up to us. For there is no ultimate, unquestionable truth in man; he knows this, as, full of questionings, he looks up to God and sets out toward him. God's word is his invitation to us to be with him in the truth. We are in danger of drowning on the open sea, and God's word is the rope ladder thrown down to us so that we can climb up into the rescuing vessel. It is the carpet, rolled out toward us so that we can walk along it to the Father's throne. It is the lantern which shines in the darkness of the world (a world which keeps silence and refuses to reveal its own nature); it casts a softer light on the riddles which torment us and encourages us to keep going. Finally, God's word is himself, his most vital, his innermost self: his only-begotten Son, of the same nature as himself, sent into the world to bring it home, back to him. And so God speaks to us from heaven and commends to us his Word, dwelling on earth for a while: "This is my beloved Son: listen to him" (Mt 17:5).⁵

⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, [Prayer](#), trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 14–15.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Centering Prayer	A method of prayer focusing silently on a sacred word to prepare oneself to receive the gift of contemplative prayer and experience God's presence within.
Church Tradition	The living transmission of the Gospel message in the Church. Scripture is considered a product of this tradition and is interpreted within its context.
Contemplatio	The fourth element of <i>lectio divina</i> ; a gaze turned toward Christ where, by grace, one may experience the text as a mystery and come into experiential contact with God.
Dei Verbum	A key document from the Second Vatican Council that outlines the Catholic Church's approach to Sacred Scripture, emphasizing the complementary nature of historical exegesis and interpretation within the Church's tradition.
Devotional Prayer	Popular forms of prayer that invite meditation on Christian mysteries, such as Novenas and The Rosary.
Disposition of Persistent Prayerfulness	A fundamental state of being characterized by a constant awareness of God's abiding presence throughout all daily activities, both waking and sleeping. It is described as a continuous prayerful state of the soul.
Historical Exegesis	An approach to biblical interpretation that focuses on understanding the human context, intent, and historical setting of the biblical writers.
Ignatian Contemplation	A prayer method that uses imagination to place oneself within a Scripture scene, engaging all senses to notice how God may be speaking.
Ignatian Examen	A method of prayerfully reviewing one's day in the presence of God.
Lectio	The first element of <i>lectio divina</i> ; the careful and repeated reading of a short biblical passage to let it "soak-in."
Lectio Divina	Literally "divine reading"; a traditional Christian practice of meditational prayer over the Scriptures, involving the four steps of <i>lectio</i> , <i>meditatio</i> , <i>oratio</i> , and <i>contemplatio</i> .
Magisterium	The teaching office of the Church, which ensures the integrity of Sacred Scripture and its interpretation in service to the Church's faith.
Meditatio	The second element of <i>lectio divina</i> ; using one's imagination to enter into the biblical scene to discover its meaning for one's life.
Meditation	Described in the Catechism as a quest where the mind seeks to understand the "why and how" of the Christian life in order to respond to what God is asking.
Oratio	The third element of <i>lectio divina</i> ; one's personal, prayerful response to the text, which can include asking for graces, offering praise, or seeking forgiveness.
Sacred Scripture	The written word of God. The Church venerates it as it does the body of Christ and sees it as vital for Church life, evangelization, and ecumenical unity.
Word of God	In the Catholic view, this refers primarily to a person, Jesus Christ. Scripture and tradition are the vehicles that communicate this living Word.