

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I recently had a conversation with a parishioner who spoke about the difficulty of relating ancient Scriptures to modern life. Yes, in one sense, the language and circumstances are radically different. Yet, what makes the Scriptures a “living language” and so relevant to our lives is that they speak a truth which is enduring. The Scriptures speak of our relationship with God and how He, who first loved us, desires so much for us to love him and one another in response to that first love. The second reading from Timothy is timely: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching...so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

Two aspects of today’s readings with which we can hopefully relate are persistence and mutuality. Most especially in difficult circumstances, it is often persistence which helps us to overcome adversity. It is easy to want to give up; we grow tired and weary. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we find time and again situations where characters face danger and obstacles and God delivers them from harm. In today’s reading from Exodus, we see such an example in the conflict between Amalek and the nation of Israel. Moses, as the leader of the Jewish people, wants to protect them as any loving father would do. The image of Aaron and Hur supporting Moses as he grows tired is so reflective of what God desires of us: to be there for one another especially in tough times. There is an absolute connection between the human struggle of being persistent and our mutual support of one another. This was true of Moses, St. Paul, the disciples and it is absolutely true for us today in the twenty-first century.

Three weeks ago, I met with a family at the University of San Francisco. They had just lost their husband and father, quite tragically, who was only fifty-two years old. It was difficult to watch them share their grief and sorrow. Yet, in the midst of it all, there was a sense of consolation and peace. His wife and children knew that they were not alone. The husband grew up in St. Brendan’s parish and yet the family decided to have his funeral mass at St. Ignatius Church on the USF campus. I asked why USF. His wife said, “I want to be able to come back here again and again, in silence, to pray.” Wow! Isn’t that the message of Jesus to his disciples in Luke’s Gospel: to pray always without becoming weary? Jesus also calls us to be persistent as the widow before the unjust judge was persistent. The old adage is true: “keep on keeping on!” Keep on coming before the Lord in prayer, not weighed down by the challenges and paradoxes of life, but open to seeking a deeper meaning and presence of God in our lives.

Jim Forest, in his book All is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day wrote of her: “What impressed him most about Dorothy Day, he wrote, ‘was her perseverance - year after year living an austere life in the grimmest of conditions, being jailed again and again, never giving up doing the works of mercy, never getting cynical, never letting her love of God and people dissolve. Anyone can be saintly for a week or two, or even a year, but to persevere from youth to old age, to remain on the cross until death - that is a mark of true holiness.’”

Fr. Tom