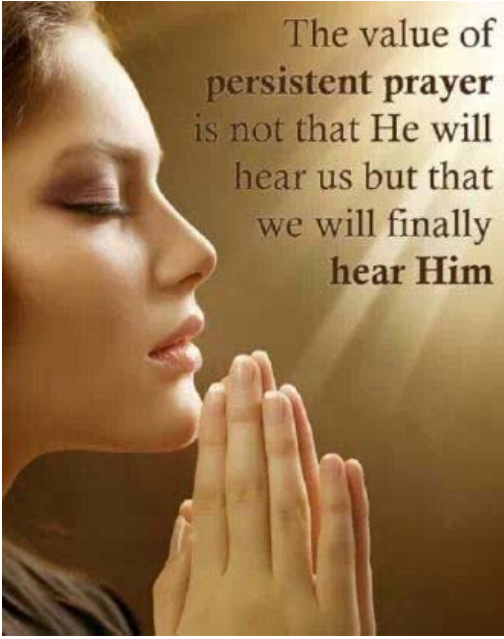


Dear Brothers and Sisters



“Jesus told them a parable about the necessity to pray always without becoming weary...”

I don't know if any of us have ever prayed like the widow in today's Gospel. To have a need so great, that we are willing to spend a whole day and night, and another day and night, and so on, until we are finally given a hearing. Maybe. But it's more likely that we say a Hail Mary or an Our Father on the fly and then wonder why God doesn't listen to us.

The widow prays incessantly, as does Moses in the first reading today. Moses prays with his arms outstretched. That's not an easy thing to do, try it! After a couple of minutes your arms feel like lead and begin to droop. You'll feel a searing pain in your shoulders. Aaron and Hur stood on either side of Moses and held his arms aloft. Aaron was Moses' brother, and Hur was his brother in law (the husband of Miriam). These two men were enabling Moses intercession. Aaron's name means 'strength,' Hur's

means 'liberty.' As long as Moses' hands were raised, the people of God defeated their enemy, Amalek. When he let his arms rest, Amalek had the better of the fight.

Each of us has an Amalek in our life, a mortal enemy who wants to defeat us. This enemy can only be overcome with prayer.

Jesus invites us to pray like the widow – incessantly, and like Moses –with our hands raised, supported by others. How can we do that?

A book titled “The Russian Pilgrim” relates the story of a Russian peasant who wanted to learn how to pray incessantly.

He met a ‘starets’, a wise monk, who taught him the prayer of the blind man in the Gospel:

“Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me because I am a sinner.”

The pilgrim began to repeat the prayer, as instructed, first for one thousand times a day, then for five thousand times a day, then ten thousand times a day... until the prayer became a part of him, in his breathing, his heartbeat, while awake or asleep. He began to see his enemies, his Amaleks, that is, his spiritual enemies, defeated. His anxieties, his doubts, his worries, his fears, his presumptions, his lust, his pride...began to subside.

This prayer of the heart, “Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner” can be prayed incessantly. You can pray it while driving the kids to school, or while shopping, or when doing yard-work, or while on the computer, or sat at the desk in work. When you realize you are not praying it, you can start again! Our Amaleks, the enemies of our soul, will begin to be mowed down.

But we cannot do this alone. We all need an Aaron and a Hur at our side to keep our arms aloft when they grow weary. None of us can live our faith, our Christianity in a bubble, in isolation. We were created in the image of God, and God is a community of persons. Each of us needs a community to support us in our faith and in our prayer. This community can be found in the Church.

Fr. Sean