

SPIRITUAL LIFE

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. John A. Sistare

You have probably have heard of these scenarios before:

Fourth down and goal and a Td will win the football game.

Down by one with 2 foul shots to take and time has run out in the basketball game.

The game is tied and it's the bottom of the ninth with 2 outs, and a fellow player in scoring position to win the game.

Some of the most exciting moments in sports are those buzzer beaters! Those moments when a team will rise together and pull out the victory against all odds! The trill of crunch time and a grand finale close at hand!

Well, in the first reading, the Israelites are in the battle of their life with Amalek and his tribe. It's crunch time for the Israelites and their very lives are at stake in this battle. However, it is in this decisive moment Moses steps forward and raises his arms in prayer. In fact, as long as his arms are raised, Israel has the upper hand (no pun intended). Did you notice this takes a team effort. Moses eventually gets tired and his arm fall. Aaron and Hur then step forward to support him. In the end, the victory is won. Later on in this text from Sacred Scripture we read that the Lord took in hand his banner (of victory). God had won this victory using Moses, Aaron and Hur as instruments.

We have to see a correlation here with this text. Look at the back wall and see whose arms are raised. Jesus has won the greatest victory of all time! By his death and resurrection, Jesus has won the victory over sin and death. Do people still die? Do they still sin? Yes to both, but they don't have the final say anymore. When our loved ones die, we believe in life eternal. When we sin, mortal or venial, we have the sacrament of confession to wash us clean. Must as Moses raised his arms on the top of the hill, so the new Moses, Jesus Christ has raised his arms on the top of the hill of Calvary and defeated sin and death. It was crunch time for all us as a human race. It was the bottom of the ninth, fourth and goal, and time for a buzzer beater. Jesus Christ, raising his arms in prayer to the Father, opened the gates of heaven, which had been closed by the sin of our first parents.

We are now called to share in this one Victory of Christ. The Victory has been won and we are called to par-

ticipate in a very real way here at Mass. Just as Aaron and Hr raised the arms of Moses, so we are called to raise the arms of Christ, which always will be raised in Victory. We raise them to the world and proclaim that the one Victory has been won. We are a people of joy with our focus on the Victory already won!

Let me give you two examples of young people who are aware of this one victory won. The first comes from a group of children in Providence that made a 15 mile pilgrimage to the Shrine of LaSalette. Actually, let me first tell you one of them said in the letter. *"Fr. Sistare gave us a cool little rhyme. I thought that was awesome because I never knew that you could rap about God. I thought you could only sing Gospel music about God. If Fr. Sistare doesn't mind, I'll sponsor him to rap some more about God."* OK, as great as that was, I want to tell you about another child's comments which show a good understanding of sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ. *"When I first started walking, I thought to myself, 'This isn't bad; I can get through this!'" but as I traveled on, I got more and more tired... How did I continue? I thought to myself 'Jesus walked a long way carrying his own cross on his back and he didn't give up and he didn't give up so I'm not going to give up.' I prayed to Jesus to help me keep going and as a I prayed, I was able to continue walking. I did complain a few times but I never gave up!"* This child knows what It means to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ.

The second example is a little closer to home. A 3rd grader in our parish made a video of himself practicing Mass. You should see this video! First of all, he has beautiful vestments and even a chalice veil. He sand every song and even knew some parts of the Mass without looking down at the words. Then, he even had announcements at the end. He said that next week there would be a ham and bean supper! There's a true future pastor in the making!!! This child certainly has been listening at Mass. He has allowed Jesus to come into his life in a very real way.

My brothers and sisters, the one victory of Christ has been won. What remains is for all of us to remain faithful and strive towards the Victory party! This is why Jesus asks in the Gospel if he will find any faith on earth. Will he? We are left to answer that question today. The Victory has been won over sin and death. Will we remain faithful and press on towards the Victory party that lies ahead?

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Exodus 17:8-13

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

Luke 18:1-8

October 20, 2013

靈 修 生 活

常 年 期 第 二 十 九 主 日

阿爾貝·范諾怡樞機主教

本主日禮儀提供給我們一個重要的教導：需要時常祈禱總不灰心。有時我們會厭倦祈禱，我們感到祈禱對生活沒多大用處，而且祈禱的效果似乎很小。於是我們試圖從事更多的工作與活動，盡一切人為方式來達到我們的目的而不在祈禱中求助於天主。耶穌所卻教我們需要時時祈禱。為了灌輸給我們這個教禱，祂說了一個比喻。

這個比喻談到一個不敬畏天主、不關心人的法官。態度不好的這個法官，只是自私，尋求一己的利益罷了。他不怕天主的審判，也就對人漠不關心了。事實上，當人不敬畏天主的時候，也不會敬重他人。

在這城裡有一個寡婦，也就是說，處在軟弱無能狀況下的一個女人。在舊約中，寡婦和孤兒是屬於最需要幫助的階層，因為他們不再有家長可依靠，所以無自衛能力，也沒有錢財。

比喻中的人物就是這樣的兩個人。寡婦去見法官，對他說：「請你制裁我的對頭，給我伸冤吧！」她講的話幾乎不可能被聽取，因為法官輕視她，而她也不能對法官施加任何壓力。她也不能按宗教法規申訴，因為法官不敬畏天主。所以這個寡婦似乎是一籌莫展了。可是她堅持不懈，毫不灰心地祈求，死纏不休。最後法官想道：「我雖不敬畏天主，也不敬重人，只因為這個寡婦常來煩擾我，我要給她伸冤，免得她不斷的來糾纏我。」這就是寡婦堅持不懈地祈求的結果。

說到此，耶穌作了一個反省：如果一個不義的法官，最後能被一個寡婦的祈求所折服，何況仁慈的天主又更會怎樣地允諾向祂祈求的人呢！

事實上天主是人格化了的慷慨大方：祂是仁慈的，所以祂常會馬上俯聽我們的禱聲。耶穌說：「天主要替祂的子民伸冤」。我們永遠不該失望，但要恆常祈禱。

每當我們祈禱時，為甚麼天主不立刻應允呢？我們可以試著給個答案：如果祈禱能自然而然地獲得應允，那麼天主就成為一架分施東西的機器了。可是祂不要成為一部分施東西的機器，而要是一個通傳自己聖愛的人。一架分施的機器不可能通傳什麼愛，僅是無意識地工作而已，而天主卻是一個人，甚至是充滿愛的三位，祂們要通過愛來改造世界。所以為祂們來說，祈禱正是同我們每個人建立個別的關係。

為此天主讓我們等待一會兒，因為堅持不懈地祈禱能加強我們與祂的個別關係。如果能肯定祈禱立刻獲得應允，那麼我們就不在乎同祂的關係了。反之，當我們需要不斷祈禱時，我們就會明白我們同天主的關係至為重要，甚至是比一切事更重要。那麼，就讓我們聽從耶穌的這個訓導吧！祂要使我們與天父產生孝愛的關係。

讀經一則十分具體地展示出祈禱的效果。在這故事中我們看到阿瑪肋克人來攻打以色列，以色列必須自衛，勝利與否完全有賴於梅瑟的祈禱。經文寫說：「梅瑟舉手的時候，以色列人就打勝仗，垂下手的時候，阿瑪肋克人就打勝仗。」這樣便顯示了祈禱的效果，堅持不懈祈禱的必要。而以色列人找到一個使梅瑟能堅持不懈祈禱的方法：那就是使梅瑟坐著，叫亞郎和胡爾托著他的雙手，以保持祈禱的姿態。「這樣梅瑟的雙手就舉著不動，直到日落的時候。於是若蘇厄打敗了阿瑪肋克王和他的軍隊。」

今天福音的結尾談到信德：「人子來臨的時候，能在世上找到這種信德嗎？」

這是一句想要激起我們增加信德的問話。明顯的，祈禱必定是信德的表示；否則不是真正的祈禱。一個人若不信天主，就不會祈求天主。一個人若不信天主慈善寬仁，就不會作真正相稱地祈禱。信德，有如祈禱態度的基礎，是不可或缺的。

保祿在讀經二裡也強調信德。他肯定指出聖經能夠教導人得救，但為得到救恩需要通過信仰基督耶穌。

聖經是天主賜給祂的子民，我們眾人的一個非凡禮物。但這禮物要通過信德去接受。如果一個沒有信德的人唸聖經，聖經就成了死的文字，不是活生生的經文；相反的，如果一個人懷著信德去唸，那麼聖經就變得生氣盎然，為大家都有用，「為教訓人、督責人、矯正過錯、並為教導人成聖，都是有益的，它使天主的人得到充分的準備，適合做各種善事。」

本主日給我們提出的兩個教訓，是相輔相成的：堅持不懈的祈禱和滿懷信德祈禱，是我們同天主個別關係的基礎。信德是望德和愛德賴以建立的基礎。因著信德我們可以在望德與愛德中成長；為能經常更好地得到天主的這些奇妙恩典，則需要常常祈禱。