

Never Lose Heart: The Power of Persistent Prayer

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

St. Monica's story is one of the most moving testimonies to the power of persistent prayer in all of Christian history. For nearly two decades, she wept and prayed for the conversion of her son, Augustine, who had fallen into a life of pride, worldly ambition, and moral confusion. He resisted her efforts, wandered through false philosophies, and lived as if God didn't exist. But Monica never gave up. Day and night, she lifted her heart to God with the deep longing of a mother who loved her son's soul. As Augustine later wrote, "She wept and prayed to God for me. She was more anxious for my spiritual death than mothers are for the bodily death of their children." Her tears bore fruit: Augustine eventually surrendered to God's grace, was baptized by St. Ambrose, and became not only a Catholic bishop but one of the greatest saints and theologians in Church history.

It is this kind of perseverance that Jesus speaks about in today's Gospel. He tells the parable of a persistent widow who keeps pleading for justice from an unjust judge. Though the judge "neither feared God nor respected any human being," he finally relents, not out of virtue, but because of the widow's unrelenting insistence. Jesus uses this story to make a powerful contrast. If even an unjust judge responds to persistence, how much more will our loving and just Father hear the prayers of his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night?

This parable, like the story of St. Monica, reminds us that prayer is not about persuading a reluctant God. Rather, it is about deepening our relationship with a God who always listens, even when the answers seem delayed. In moments when God seems silent or distant, we are invited not to despair but to press in closer with trust and humility. As St. Augustine also said, "Longing desire prayeth always, though the tongue be silent. If thou art ever longing, thou art ever praying."

Jesus concludes the parable with a probing question: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" In other words, will he find people who are still praying, still believing, still trusting, even when life has been hard and answers have not come easily?

Catholics are called to this kind of enduring faith, a faith that does not waver when God's timing is mysterious, and a faith that clings to hope when the world tempts us toward despair. Persistent prayer, rooted in trust and humility, opens us to God's will and forms us into people who wait in hope, just as Monica did, just as the widow did.

So let us pray—and keep praying. Let us not lose heart. God sees. God hears. And God will respond.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy