

29th Week of Ordinary Time 2022

Exodus 17:8-13; Ps 120 ; Tim 3:14-4:2; Luke 18:1-8

But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?¹

When I was a child I had a book called ‘Put the Kettle On.’ It was a firm favourite. It was a short and colourful book in which the father would be sitting reading the paper, or coming home from work, or the local football match and he would encounter situations in front of which he felt powerless or enraged: his daughter dying her hair orange, his son tying pots and pans to the cat’s tail, or his football team losing. His response to these fatigues of the day was always the same. He would bellow out, ‘Mother, put the kettle on!’ Tea was his fall back when things became too much.

Alongside tea, faith can be treated like a comforting fall back. I have frequently heard people say ‘Well, there is nothing left to do but pray’ or some similar advice. Prayer is for those occasions when all is hopeless and beyond our control. A kind of gap filler. I agree that prayer – I am using prayer and faith a little interchangeably – prayer, in such circumstances as facing skyrocketing fuel prices as winter approaches, abuse in the church, the continuing bloodshed in the Ukraine, economic meltdown in Europe, and increasing gang fueled knife crime on our streets all warrant urgent prayer.

Moses and the Israelites facing the army of Amalek seems to warrant prayer. But it is striking that Moses does not pray in words in this circumstance, at least nothing is recorded. He just acts, or maybe that is his prayer. He tells Joshua to fight Amalak while he will stand on the hill while

holding his staff aloft above his head. Elsewhere in the book of Exodus, God speaks to Moses and tells him what is required, such as when He meets with Moses in the burning bush and sends him on his mission to set the Hebrews free from their captivity in Israel.² At other times Moses asks for God’s help as when he fears that the people are ready to kill him and he cries out ‘*What shall I do with this people*’, and God commands him to strike the rock from which water then issues out.³ Moses also listens to other people’s advice, as when Jethro tells him to appoint wise men to help him with the task of judging and ruling the people.⁴

Moses is called our ‘Father in Faith’ both by the Jewish people and Christians. This is not because he is always at prayer with his eyes shut and his hands pressed together, but because he is always with God. He walks with him, he talks with him, he speaks and is spoken to and he listens to the wisdom of others, he even leans on them for help. Moses has the spiritual gifts of Wisdom and Counsel so he knows what to do.

Mary is our Mother in Faith. She no doubt spent time in prayer, but her life is so open to God that she says ‘yes’ even when she cannot not fully understand what her ‘yes’ means, apart from yielding to, and loving God. If you want a starting place for the merits of Mary and why the church holds her in such high regard then I would recommend that you pray the Litany of Loretto, perhaps including it at the end of Rosary, every time you pray it.

Virgin most Renowned... pray for us
Virgin most Powerful ... pray for us
Virgin most Merciful... pray for us
Virgin most Faithful... pray for us

¹ Luke 18:8

² Exodus 3

³ Exodus 17

⁴ Exodus 18

29th Week of Ordinary Time 2022

There it is – ‘faith’ - right in the middle of the Litany, in the middle of Lady’s merits. And this faith – faith meaning ‘trust’ – this is faith in its fullness, not something which is picked up and put down like a cup of tea, it is something which we are: a people of prayer. We are faithful because we walk with God and let him permeate us and fill us with his presence.

But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?’⁵

Jesus will come again, not to see if we are at prayer, or having a moment of faith, but to judge how much we have become like Moses; like his own beloved mother, Mary; like his Apostles and Saints, how much we have become – not spoken like, not acted like, not appeared like.... but how much we have actually become like Him. How much have we allowed our faith to form us in becoming His brothers and sisters? Like Moses holding the rod up on high and whose arms grow tired so that he needs to be supported by Aaron and Hur, we too are supported when we are tired. We have Sacred Scripture, we have Holy Church and her sacraments, we have prayer, we have the Holy Spirit, we have each other. We have enough to live in prayer. Even when we are having a cup of tea.

⁵ Luke 18:8