

# The Widow Wins

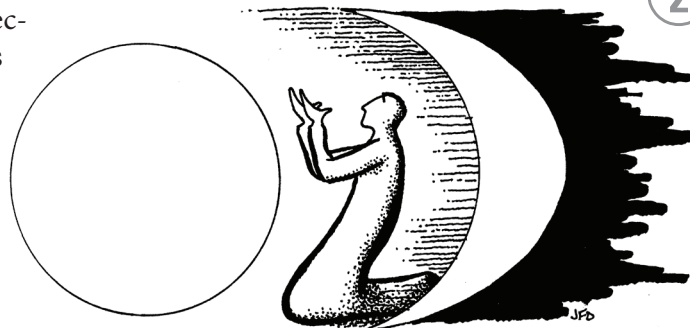
*This Week's Readings at Mass*

- ▶ Exodus 17:8-13 - Battle with Amalek
- ▶ 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2 - Apostolic charge
- ▶ Luke 18:1-8 - The corrupt judge

In first reading, the Israelites defeat Amalek's forces on their way to the Promised Land. This time, Moses and his staff can't do it alone—Moses needs the support of Aaron and Hur during the long battle. Likewise, the second reading from 2 Timothy encourages readers to remain steadfast in their faithfulness, persisting “whether it is convenient or inconvenient.” The parable of the dishonest judge concludes this cycle of teaching about the need for persistence without growing weary.

Right at the outset of the Gospel reading, Jesus tells us the “moral of the story” before sharing the parable of the unjust judge. The point, he says, is to “pray always and not to lose heart.” Upon hearing this, some of us may immediately lose heart, knowing that realistically we can't “pray always.” However, the original Greek sense of this phrase is to practice *consistent* prayer, not continual and perpetual prayer. The second half of the phrase, sometimes translated as “without becoming weary” or “not to lose heart,” has the connotation of not giving up or stopping because of discouragement. Surely this kind of prayer is possible for all of us: consistent and determined, even when we grow weary or discouraged. The widow's story certainly bears out this description.

In ancient Israel, widows were due particular care and concern from the authorities because they were one of the most vulnerable classes of people. In fact, kings and leaders were judged by their treatment of widows. Many Old Testament passages called for the special protection of widows. “Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow” (Dt. 27:19). Immediately, Jesus' hearers would have been on the side of the widow, and



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“Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient.”

**Sheepish Question:**  
What do I seek to sustain my commitment to the Gospel?

concerned about the cold-hearted judge who cared nothing for her or God's laws. Probably they were delighted by her courage and persistence, and humored by the possibility that she might actually sock it to him and give him a black eye (as the original Greek suggests!). If a poor, powerless woman had the pluck to keep demanding justice from an unfair judge, certainly the disciples can learn persistence from her, trusting that God cares for them far more than the judge cared for the people under his jurisdiction.

## Questions of the Week

- 1 Does it make a difference for you to understand Jesus' teaching as one of praying consistently without giving up instead of praying perpetually? Is that possible for you?
- 2 When have you experienced—or heard of—a vulnerable person or class of people clamor for justice until they won?

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