

Sunday Homily

Title Homily on a Strong Woman

Date: October 19, 2025

Sunday: 29th Sunday of the Year (C cycle)

Scripture: Luke 18:1-8

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Text: The last line in this Gospel is a challenge. Jesus speaks, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” St. Luke built up the challenge step by step in previous chapters. Let me take it step by step.

First step: **“When the Son of Man comes.”** In the chapter before today’s Gospel, Jesus taught about the Second Coming: “The coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, ‘Look here it is,’ or ‘There it is.’ For behold, [the kingdom of God is among you:]” (Lk 17:20-21). Some translate *among you* as *within you*. Now, our teachers said the Second Coming is a future event. But Jesus makes it present tense. Here’s how it works. We live in clock time, hours, and minutes. Our time, however, is only a subset of God’s time. God’s time is eternity. Eternity contains all time including our clock time. In God’s eternity everything is perfected. We perceive glimpses of eternity. They seem to be future events because our present time is not perfect, is it? At any moment, however, God’s time can break into our time. We who receive Christ’s Body and Blood, know Christ is within us **EVEN NOW**.

Next step: **Will Jesus find faith when he comes?** One chapter before today’s Gospel, Jesus described faith, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you’” (Lk 17:6). Faith is a power to change our landscape, meaning, to change ourselves, to change our world.

Now, to the parable of the widow. For the contemporary preacher, the parable is a headache. It’s on justice and human rights. You just heard Jesus say, “Will not God...secure the

RIGHTS of his chosen ones who call out to him...” (Lk 18:7). And you just heard Jesus say that God will “see to it that JUSTICE is done for [his chosen ones]...” (Lk 18:8). In God’s perfect eternity, human rights are universal, applicable to all people everywhere; justice has no borders or boundaries. In our time, however, justice and human rights are political; they are a struggle to obtain and to maintain. Have pity on a preacher, please, who must deal with eternal issues that are also hot political issues, like human rights and justice!

Let’s see how a very conservative pope, John Paul II, lists human rights. In an encyclical called *Centesimus Annus*, he echoed popes from the previous century, ideas that are incorporated into the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and included in the catechism. John Paul believes human rights and social justice are matters of faith. He wrote on the right to life; the right to establish a family and keep one’s family together; he wrote on the right to pursue truth; a right to private property; on a worker’s right to support a family in dignity, and therefore a worker’s right to a just wage. He supported a right to leisure and rest. He promoted a right to health care, old age care, and unemployment compensation. He advocated for the right of all people to engage in their country’s future, to participate as equals in political issues. He taught a principle of the universal destination of the world’s goods, meaning that everyone should share in the world’s goods and distribute them with preferential care for the poor. Because the world’s goods should be accessible to all, John Paul taught the right to migrate. He wrote about the right to one’s religion. And on: John Paul believed ALL time is lived in God’s eternal time. So, human rights are religious issues.

Today’s parable touches on a particular person, this widow. When we try to assess a particular problem, we need a definition of justice. If I were to summarize the prophets and the

teaching of our church, I would offer this definition: [Social or biblical justice is the arrangement of society so every person has the means to a good and decent life.:] By having the means, I assume that anyone who is capable has some work, some job, or task to achieve a good life. No woman in the first century had any rights; she had no means to secure her life. She could not keep her own money or hold a job. Some male watched over her. The widow in the Gospel did not have a brother or son to secure her means to a decent life. So, she turned to a judge, even to the point of threatening to hit him upside the head. Now, Jesus knew strong women—his mother, for instance. Jesus thought this strong widow and all women, deserve rights.

So, we arrive back at the Lord's question: Will He find faith? Will He find men and women using faith's power to pursue justice and human rights for themselves and all God's children? Because He comes here today in Word and Sacrament, the question when He comes is whether we will receive Him? Will He find faith that life can come closer to perfection in our time because now is part of God's time?