

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

GOD IS PRESENT

SUNDAY READINGS:

EXODUS 17:8-13

PSALM 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

2 TIMOTHY 3:14-4:2

LUKE 18:1-8

situations, the cry that so often in history has been raised up to God has re-emerged: Lord, why do you not intervene? Why do you seem absent?" (October 5, 2025)

As anyone who has suffered a tragic loss or endured catastrophe will tell you, there are no easy answers to those questions. While we would be unwise to pretend otherwise, this Sunday's readings can at least help us navigate the question of where and how the Lord is present in our lives and adversity. In the reading from Exodus, both Joshua and Moses find that fidelity to God is quite literally beyond their physical capacities: Joshua cannot defeat Amalek without Moses, and Moses cannot assist Joshua without help from Aaron and Hur. At no point during this account, however, are either Joshua or Moses presented as "weak" or "insufficient to the task." Instead, we find that Lord's work on Earth is a communal endeavor. **God is present to us through others.**

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In the Second Letter to Timothy, St. Paul reminds us **God is present to us also through Sacred Scripture**, which provides us with guidance and equips us “for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:17) Writing from prison, he also encourages us to remain persistent, as does Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. Here, as the Scripture tells us, Jesus offers his disciples “The Parable of the Persistent Widow” in the express hope that they might “pray always without becoming weary.” (Lk 18:1) This is the third lesson we can take from this collection of readings: **God is present to us in prayer**. And while each one of us has likely had the experience of praying to God and receiving no readily discernible answer, Jesus reminds us here that God is not only listening but responding, even if it is in ways cannot know or understand in our earthly lives.

This Gospel reading provides another, admittedly more subtle clue to the Lord’s presence in our lives. Note the protagonist of Jesus’ parable: a widow who sits at the mercy of a dishonest judge. As so often happens, Jesus here points to a person with little social, economic or political power as the authentic witness of faith. As Pope Leo notes in *Dilexi te*, his first major document as pope and an affirmation of continuity with Pope Francis, “God shows a preference for the poor: the Lord’s words of hope and liberation are addressed first of all to them. Therefore, even in their poverty or weakness, no one should feel abandoned.” (DT 21) When Jesus urges perseverance, he is doing so first and foremost to those whom society chooses to disregard, cast aside, and target with scorn and deprivation.

It's important to reflect upon this as we seek the Lord’s direction in our lives. Jesus, Pope Leo explains, “presented himself to the world not only as a poor Messiah, but also as the Messiah of and for the poor.” (DT 19) **When we seek God’s assistance—be it through prayer, reflecting upon Scripture, or by calling upon the help of others—we should take care to ensure that our intentions align with God’s mission of love and liberation for all people, which requires special attention to the oppressed and marginalized.** This, Scripture reminds us constantly, is our path to salvation. As Pope Leo tells us, our attention to suffering, marginalization and poverty “is not a matter of mere human kindness but a revelation: contact with those who are lowly and powerless is a fundamental way of encountering the Lord of history. In the poor, he continues to speak to us.” (DT 5)

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading – Exodus 17:8-13: Moses blesses Joshua's defense of Israel with the staff of God. As the battle wages on, Moses grows weary, relying upon Aaron and Hur to keep his arms raised in blessing.

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8: The psalm reminds us that all true help and guidance come from the Lord, our loving creator.

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2: St. Paul notes the divine inspiration of all Scripture and encourages that the followers of Jesus turn to it for guidance wisdom. He also urges persistence and patience in proclaiming the Word of God, whatever the circumstances.

Gospel – Luke 18:1-8: God answers persistence, not power. Jesus credits the widow's persistence to swaying the unjust judge, noting that God, who is just, secures the rights of those who call out.

Notes and Commentary by Kevin Foy, executive director of the
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