

**Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C  
(Oct. 17, 2004)**

**Don't Give Up!**

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary – the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. And the parable he tells them is a kind of a funny story about a widow who comes before an unjust judge and badgers him until she gets what she wants.

Now to get a better idea of what is going on here it helps to remember a couple of things. First of all you know that the parables of Jesus always contain some element of surprise, something that makes his listeners sit up and take notice. Well, what is the element of surprise here? To understand that we have to look at the situation of widows in Jesus' time.

She has no husband. And this widow presumably has no son. Otherwise he would have been the one to come before the judge. So she is alone without anyone to support her. And in the popular notion of the time, she had no rights either. She was alone, defenseless against an unjust society represented by the unjust judge, and as far as he was concerned, as well as the people listening to Jesus, she might as well not have existed. And yet, alone, defenseless, and practically a non-entity she comes before the judge. That's the element of surprise. It would not have happened.

And why is it a kind of a funny story? Here is this widow who keeps coming day after day, never giving up and saying over and over, "I want justice. Give me justice. Here I am again, judge. I was here yesterday. I'm back today, and I'll be back again tomorrow. Give me justice, you wicked judge. Justice, justice, justice." And how does the judge react? Finally he says to himself, "While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me, I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me." Now the word that is translated "strike" here really means "lest she come and hit me in the eye." And at that, the people listening to Jesus would have burst out laughing. Why? Well you can see it I'm sure. Here is this big tough judge who is not afraid of God or any human being, but he is afraid of this widow, afraid she

will give him a black eye. And so he gives in.

What is the lesson of the parable? Jesus spells out at least one meaning when he lets us know this: if an unjust and wicked judge will give justice to the person who persists and does not give up, how much more so will God be willing to help those who love him and persevere in prayer with great faith and confidence.

There is another meaning here and it has to do with justice. I'd love to talk about that but I've been told to keep it short today since our pastor is going to address you at the end of this Mass. Besides one lesson is enough for any Sunday anyway. Just remember: our God is always willing to help those who love him and persevere in prayer with great faith and confidence.