

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

Exodus 17:8-13

The Amalekites were Canaanite people whom God required be driven out of the land before Israel could enter the Promised Land. They were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob (who was later called Israel). That is, Amalek and Israel are related. Esau married two Canaanite women, (The Canaanites were descended from Ham, the son of Noah, through an incestuous relationship with his mother.) which grieved his parents, Isaac and Rebekah. We also know that Amalek was the son of one of Esau's sons and a concubine. In other words, Amalek is the illegitimate son of Canaanites. The Canaanites present a continuous problem to Israel because they worship gods other than the one true God. Amalek's grandparents (Esau and his Canaanite wife) would have symbolized unfaithfulness to God. It would be fair to say that Amalek and his descendants, because of his origins and the continuing practice of idolatry by his people, represented all that was corrupting to Israel. If Israel failed to be true to God, it could not be a light to the other nations as God intended. There was a lot at stake on the battlefield. Would it be Israel or Amalek, God or the gods?!

8In those days, Amalek came and waged war against Israel. This was the first military activity of the newly freed Hebrews. The Amalekites controlled the caravan routes between Arabia and Egypt and they resented the intrusion of these Hebrews.⁸

9Moses, therefore, said to Joshua, Joshua was the military leader of the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land. He will be the successor of Moses.³ “Pick out certain men, and tomorrow go out and engage Amalek in battle. I will be standing on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” The only way to drive out this corrupting influence from the Promised Land was by direct divine intervention, symbolized by the raising of the staff of God in the hand of Moses. (This same staff had become a snake in front of the Pharaoh and it was used to part the waters of the sea and to bring forth water from the rock. It was given to Moses to be a sign of God's power.)¹

10So Joshua did as Moses told him: he engaged Amalek in battle after Moses had climbed to the top of the hill with Aaron Aaron was the brother of Moses and his designated speaker. He was also the high priest of the Israelites.³ and Hur. Hur was another high ranking Israelite who helped Aaron govern the people when Moses was absent.³

11As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Here we see Moses directing the battle from a distance but his main involvement is by interceding for his people, asking God to give them victory.² Moses is being shown here as a figure of Jesus, who also climbed a hilltop, and on Mount Calvary stretched out His hands between heaven and earth to interceded for us against the final enemy—sin and death.¹⁵ Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight.

12Moses' hands, however, grew tired; so they put a rock in place for him to sit on. Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, so that his hands remained steady till sunset.

13And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. They killed them without quarter.³

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

Timothy was faced with those who would “water down” the doctrine of faith. False teachers were trying to put pressure on him. This was Paul's last letter, written from jail in Rome shortly before his death. In this

selection, two pieces of advice stand out: Timothy should stay true to the teaching he has received and he must keep sacred Scripture as his point of reference because it is inspired by God.⁴

Beloved:

14Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, Timothy learned the truths of the faith from his mother, Eunice, a Jewish convert, and from St. Paul.³ Here we are reminded that parents are the primary teachers of their children. In fact, the role of parents in the moral education and spiritual formation of their children is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.⁵ (CCC 2221)

15and that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, This surely meant the Hebrew Bible, for the New Testament had not yet come into being. However, if what he claims of the Old Testament is true, how much truer it is of the precious words of the New Testament.⁹ The Church did not decide on which books of the Bible would form the canon until the Council of Hippo in 393A.D. and this letter was written around 65 A.D. (Mark was probably written between A.D. 65 to 70, Luke and Matthew are usually dated after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and John is usually dated around the end of the first century.)⁸ It was the glory of the Jews that their children from their earliest days were taught and trained in the law. The Jews claimed that their children learned the law even from their swaddling clothes, and that they drank it in with their mother's milk. They claimed that the law was so imprinted on the heart and mind of a Jewish child that he would sooner forget his own name than he would forget the law.⁹ **which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** These Scriptures give WISDOM for salvation to those who believe in Christ. The Scriptures alluded to here may well be the Pentateuch, the way of covenant living (including the 10 Commandments).⁷

16All Scripture is inspired by God "Inspired" comes from a Greek word that means "blow" or "breathe out." Applied to the Scriptures, it means that everything written down in the bible has been breathed forth from the mouth of the Lord. God is thus the ultimate source of Scripture and, indeed, its principal Author. God collaborated with human authors in producing the biblical books. Inspiration means that the Holy Spirit acted in and through the human writers as they wrote, so that the words they left behind are truly sacred expressions of God's instructions to his people.¹⁸ All 73 books of the Bible are inspired by God, and these historical narratives, poetry, prayers, apocalyptic visions, and letters are all of great help to the Church in its mission. St. Gregory the Great said, "What is Sacred Scripture if not a kind of letter from almighty God to his creature?... Please study and reflect on the words of your Creator every day. Learn what the will of God is by entering deep into the words of that God, so as to desire divine things more ardently and set your soul aflame with great yearning for heavenly delights."⁴ **and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness,** For the work of God to be fruitful it must be fueled by the word of God.¹ St. John of Damascus reminds us that Sacred Scripture is extremely profitable for the soul. Like a tree planted near a stream, the soul that is watered by Scripture grows hearty and bears fruit in due season. It is fitted with leaves that are always green, with actions pleasing to God.¹⁸

17so that one who belongs to God This is applied particularly to Timothy insofar as ordination has conferred on him a ministry in the Church.⁴ Though the letter is addressed to the teaching authority in the Christian community, every devout disciple can hear these words with profit.¹⁶ **may be competent, equipped for every good work.**

4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, This is a solemn oath that Paul uses to impress Timothy with the task of preaching the word.¹ who will judge the living and dead, Jesus will judge both those who are living at that time and all those who have died previously.⁸ and by his appearing and his kingly power:

2proclaim the word; This includes the whole message of the Gospel: all the truths to be believed, the commandments to be kept and the sacraments and other supernatural resources to be availed of.⁴ be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. Paul urges Timothy to be zealous, taking advantage of every opportunity to preach, even though the particular occasion might not be considered fitting: for the word of God is always in season.⁸ According to a survey by the Barna Group released on July 9, 2007, Catholics remain the largest denominational segment in the country (22%) and they are the least likely of all self-professed Christians to profess their faith in public and to share their faith with others.¹⁷

Luke 18:1-8

The argument of the following story is this: if the quality of perseverance on the part of a helpless and destitute widow could so prevail on a godless and heartless judge as to make him take action in her behalf, how much more will a kind and holy Father in heaven hear and answer His children who cry out to Him and seek help at His hands day and night! If He delays, it is for their good; but He will surely come to their aid. What seems long to them is short to Him. The days and years of earthly life are less than moments when compared to eternity. And when least expected, He will come, and His judgment will be executed quickly.¹⁴

1Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.

2He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. This man is not religious and has no scruples. Anyone who came before him or fell under his authority had reason to fear and little to hope for.¹⁴

3And a widow Widows were often powerless and vulnerable in ancient society. They had no defender at law and were therefore at the mercy of dishonest judges.³ This widow was probably poor and without influence so she couldn't bribe the judge or pull any strings thus she prevails by persevering.¹⁴ The widow is a type of the Church deprived of the visible presence of Christ, her bridegroom; but she also represents the disciples and the holy souls of every age.¹⁴ in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' The adversary is a figure of Satan and of his many agents who in a thousand ways harass and imperil human salvation.¹⁴

4For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being,

5because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The literal translation means that she may sock him in the eye. The term can also mean to damage the reputation¹³

6The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. The indifference of the judge to the widow's distress was a violation of justice. The parable's outcome is thus a mere shadow of God's concern for us. If an unjust and callous judge will vindicate a persevering widow, the Father will much more come to the aid of his prayerful children.¹⁰

7Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? Praying deepens our self, increases our spiritual capacity. A desire that is long entertained, a prayer often repeated, enlarges our heart.¹¹

8I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Constant prayer ensures that we will be on the side of God's justice when He comes because our prayer is a demonstration of our faith. Prayer in faith leads to holiness. Jesus is not so much suggesting that we nag God until we get what we want, but that we pray often, indeed constantly, so that we will be the holy, faith-filled people He longs to find upon His return.¹ St. Augustine comments: "In order to pray, let us believe; and for our faith not to weaken, let us pray. Faith causes prayer to grow, and when prayer grows, our faith is strengthened."¹²

God wants our worship because we become like what we worship.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "The Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst," (2) "The Navarre Bible: Pentateuch," (3) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (4) "The Navarre Bible: Thessalonians And Pastoral epistles," (5) "Catechism of the Catholic Church," (6) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (7) "The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Timothy" by Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J., (8) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (9) "The Letters To Timothy, Titus and Philemon" by William Barclay, (10) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke," (11) "Saint Joseph Commentary On The Sunday Readings Year C" by Achille Degeest, O.F.M., (12) "The Navarre Bible: St. Luke," (13) "The Gospel of Luke" by Luke Timothy Johnson, (14) "The Parables of Christ" by Charles J. Callan, O.P., (15) "Breaking the Bread" by The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology, (16) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2004" by Aelred R. Rosser, (17) The Barna Group Website Article: "Catholics Have Become Mainstream America", and (18) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letters of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller; who compiled these commentaries.