**“Perseverance”**

One word that describes our three readings is ***perseverance***. The act of perseverance is the ultimate trust in God that He will always come to our rescue. It is the manifestation of our unfaltering trust in God that He has our back. Perseverance is the art of never giving up. It is the strong desire to overcome obstacles no matter how many times we fail. Our response to failure of what we desire that is in accordance to God’s desire, should be to keep returning to Him every time we are knocked down by adversity.

In our first reading, Naaman persevered in the face of doubt and adversity. After being encouraged to listen to Prophet Elisha by his Jewish slave servant, Naaman in persevering, plunged into the Jordan River seven times. God then cured him of his leprosy and his skin was turned back in time to look and feel like that of a baby.

What Naaman did was that he did not give up in seeking relief. He had two choices, to reject or accept the advice of his slave servant. He chose to accept her advice. We too, when we are faced with adversity, should seek out the advice of others who we know are also faithful to God. Sometimes, it is through others that God speaks to us so we can overcome obstacles in life.

Elisha refusal to accept Naaman’s gifts, exemplify the teaching of Jesus when He sent His apostles out to preach, heal, raise the dead, and cast out demons. He told them **“Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.”** (Matt 10:8). Naaman then did the unimaginable by asking for mule loads of soil from Israel to take to his home in Damascus.

Naaman’s act regarding the soil, reminds me of a story of Old Murphy from Ireland who loved his Country so much. When he was about to die, he asked his children to take him outside so he could die next to the soil of his beloved Country. As he was dying, he grabbed some of the soil and held on to it as he died.

When he got to heaven’s gate, God met him and told him he was a good man. However for him to get through the gate he must let go of the dirt in his hand. Murphy refused and God left him at the gate and went back inside.

After some few years, God came out as one of Murphy’s drinking buddies. After drinking and joking for a while, again God told him to let go of the dirt. Again Murphy refused to let go of the dirt because he loved Ireland too much. God left him at the gate again.

After more years, for the third time, God appeared to Murphy as one of his granddaughters. She told Murphy how everybody missed him and begged him to come in. By this time Murphy’s joints had gotten stiffened and he could no longer hold on to the dirt. The soil fell from his hand and God brought him in. To Murphy’s surprise, in heaven, he saw the whole of Ireland and much more.

I hope Naaman did not fall into the same trap about God’s creation as Murphy did. Sometimes we are so in love with God’s creation that we think there could be nothing better. We forget to make God number one in our lives. We forget about Christ’s promise to those who follow Him.

In our second reading, we heard about Paul pointing out to Timothy about his suffering and perseverance for the sake of the cross of Christ. Paul saw his perseverance in suffering as a way of encouraging those who would come after him to also persevere for their faith in times of trial, tribulation, and suffering.

He encouraged Timothy and those who would carry on the Gospel of Jesus, to persevere when trials and tribulations come and not deny Jesus. Because Jesus said, He would deny us to His Father if we deny Him. Paul enjoined them not to be unfaithful to God by not following His teachings though God would always remain faithful otherwise, He would be denying His essence as God if He is unfaithful. Paul’s words resonate for all Christians.

In the Gospel, we are reminded of perseverance by the foreigner the Samaritan who came back to give thanks to God after being cleansed of leprosy. He could have gone straight home to show himself to his people like the others. Instead, he came back to worship God in thanksgiving for His kindness to a sinner.

The Samaritan was rewarded for his perseverance in coming back. Jesus tells him, **“Your faith has saved you.”** This means, he was not only healed physically as the other nine, but he was also healed spiritually by Jesus for his perseverance in coming back.

This is a reminder to all of us that in all circumstances, whether good or bad, we should praise, worship, and be thankful to God for His mercy and unending love. When we do all three, we open ourselves to more grace from God.

As we come to receive Him in the Eucharist, let us ask Him for His grace of perseverance.