

## DEACON GEORGE'S HOMILY FOR 29<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Today's Gospel tells us how a widow's perseverance wins the day. According to the tradition of Israel, a judge was expected to be impartial, except for three groups of people – the widow, the orphan and the stranger. This was because these groups of people lived in the absence of family love and support. They were vulnerable people living in a society where influence and money talked. A judge was expected to be partial to them and champion their cause to ensure their rights. Their religious law stated: *"if you ill-treat them in any way and they make an appeal to me for help, I shall certainly hear their appeal, my anger will be roused and I shall put you to the sword. (Exodus 20:22-23).*

In today's story we meet the judge and the widow at a crisis point. We have no case history for the widow, but we do for the judge. The judge is a man who is influenced neither by religious principle nor by public opinion. Both justice and compassion are absent from his dealings with the widow. The widow has no influential friends to bring pressure on the judge and she has no money to bribe him: all she has is the justice of her cause and her own persistence.

The justice of her cause, however, is clearly not enough. She has the nerve and she exercises it relentlessly on the judge. He refuses her for a long time, and she refuses to give in. It becomes a war of nerves in which eventually, it is the judge's nerves that gives in. He has had enough and gives in for the sake of his own health. However, the widow has, in fact, done him a favour. She has exhausted him into justice. Her persistence pays off in the end.

Jesus teaches us in this Gospel, the need for perseverance in prayer. Perseverance develops our trust and confidence in God. It helps us to be humble and realise how weak we are when left to ourselves. It keeps us close to God, as we learn how dependent we are on his generosity. If only we would realise that God is perhaps never closer to us than when we think he is forgetting us. Our trials of life, spiritual or temporal, which he allows us to suffer, are not obstacles to our spiritual progress, but rather stepping-stones without which we could not cross the rivers of life.

God wants each one of us to be in heaven. But we are all different, we each have a different road to heaven. and God is supervising the journey of each one of us. He is always there to help us if the obstacle on our road is insurmountable. We may, and we must, keep asking God for the spiritual and temporal favours which we feel we need. We must never grow despondent or feel that God has lost interest in us, if he delays in granting these favours.

Story – the leaking roof.

You see, our minds are limited, our human intellect can only see but one small section of the immense tapestry which God is weaving for the human race. And yes, we would all like immediate results in our own tiny corner of that tapestry while the all-wise God is occupied with the whole picture.

However, when we shall look back on our earthly journey, from the happy vantage point of heaven, we shall see how effectively and how lovingly God regulated our journey. And when he did not grant a certain favour, it was because he had a much more important one to give us, one we did not ask for, or realized we needed.