

The Sunday of the Judge

(St. Luke 18:1-8)

This Sunday is dedicated to the idea of prayer, the aim of which is explained in the first lines of the Gospel reading of the day: "And He (Jesus) told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray, and not lose heart."

The judge of the parable (by which the Sunday is named) is another "son of this world," who "neither feared God nor had regard for man." The other person in the scene is a widow, the victim of an iniquity, who asks the judge to do her justice. But the judge pays her no attention because he can not make a profit from her. The widow, however, tirelessly presses her complaints before the judge, who like the steward of the previous Sunday, was said to be "injust." The judge finally renders a decision only to rid her of him and sends her away.

The widow is a symbol of humanity which feels itself very weak in face of passions and other external violences. The human being, therefore, earnestly appeals to God to save him of those forces. Very often God is "long-suffering," that is, He does not answer our prayers so quickly and in the way we ask Him to. But the parable teaches us "not to lose heart." If a godless and impudent judge finally submits to the supplication of the widow, shall not God, the good and the righteous, hear and "avenge His servants who cry to Him day and night?"

The teaching of this parable is encouraging particularly for those people who are suffering and of those who are persecuted in their search for justice. But it is not enough to pray just saying: "Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; preserve me from violent men" (Psalms 140:1). It is necessary to be and remain a "servant" of God, because to such servants God has promised the wrath of His "vengeance." Those who declare themselves in word or deed beyond the laws of God, can not secure His protection; but those who stay in His service and cry: "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before Thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth," may receive an answer, sometimes, such as "rest a little longer," for God has promised that He will avenge the blood of His servants on their torturers (Revelations 6:10-11 and 19:2).

Hence, beyond the faithful administration of the

problems of mammon and life, earnest and perseverent prayer is one of the fundamental conditions by which a person might remain in his Father's house and in the position he has there regained.

The last line of the parable concludes with the meaning of the Sunday, which is the *seeking of justice through prayer*. Further, it establishes the essential condition without which prayer could never be serving its goal. That fundamental condition is *Faith*.

Archbishop Shnork Kaloustian
"The Golden Chain of Lenten Sundays"

PRAYER

"One of the best known of the Desert Fathers of fourth-century Egypt, St. Sarapion the Sindonite, travelled once on pilgrimage to Rome. Here he was told of a celebrated recluse, a woman who lived always in one small room, never going out. Sceptical about her way of life — for he himself was a great wanderer — Sarapion called on her and asked: 'Why are you sitting there?' To this she replied: 'I am not sitting. I am on a journey...'

I AM NOT SITTING. I AM ON A JOURNEY. Every Christian may apply these words to himself or herself. To be a Christian is to be a traveller. Our situation, say the Greek Fathers, is like that of the Israelite people in the desert of Sinai; we live in tents, not houses, for spiritually we are always on the move. We are on a journey through the inward space of the heart, a journey not measured by the hours of our watch or the days of the calendar, for it is a journey out of time into eternity..."

The Orthodox Way, *Father Kallistos Ware*

One of the great spiritual journeys of the Christian year is the 40-day period of Lent. True to the spirit of Father Kallistos' recluse, we try to do and "move" as little as possible during Lent, so that all of our energies are focused on the inner journey. We eat less, restrict social activities, try to cut out distracting habits and at the same time spend more time in prayer, reading the Bible, giving to those who have less than we do.

Prayer is an important part of the Lenten "journey" and one with which we all have difficulty. Sunday school students are used to being in church and pray-