

*Ordinary 29C 2013*  
*Will People Still Believe?*  
*Father Matera*

At the end of the gospel we just heard, Jesus asks this question: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” Anticipating that day when he will return at the end of the ages to judge the living and dead, Jesus wonders what he will find: Will he find his disciples faithful to the gospel he proclaimed, or will he find that his disciples have abandoned the gospel he taught them? Will he find his disciples like the rest of humanity, or will he find them still living according to the gospel he taught them?

Although Jesus posed this question to his disciples, it is a question he also poses to us. If Christ were to return in our lifetime what would he find? Would he find us eagerly waiting for him, believing and trusting in him, or would he find us without faith and hope? If Christ were to return in our day would he find us among the faithful remnant that continues to believe in the gospel, or would he find us among a growing number of people who no longer believe in the gospel that was handed on to them?

I ask these questions because we are living in a time when it is more and more difficult to believe. We are living in a time, when many of our contemporaries live a purely secular life: a life without any connection to the community of faith. We are living in a time when many people have little time for prayer, and seemingly less time for God. We are approaching a time—indeed it has already arrived—when we must choose between living in a purely secular way that has no place for God and Christ and living as a faithful community of believers who live in and for Christ. This is why Jesus’ question is so important: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

The widow of today’s gospel presents us with an example of persistent prayer and faith that can be helpful in our struggle to remain faithful. She lives on the margins of society without the power and means to vindicate herself. The judge who is supposed to do her justice is corrupt and merely sees her as an annoyance. But against all odds, this woman persists until the judge rules on her behalf. This widow, then, provides us with an example of the kind of faith and prayer we need today if we are to remain faithful to the end.

The world about us asks why we continue to believe. Why do we belong to a community of faith? Don't we know that this is a new age in which there is no need for God, no need for faith? Don't we know that the faith to which we hold belongs to a bygone day? Why do we continue to practice such an old fashion faith?

If we are to persevere in our faith, we need the persevering faith of the widow of today's gospel, a faith that is firmly grounded in Jesus Christ. If we are to persevere in our faith we need to support and encourage each other. This is why we assemble each week to worship the one we call our Lord and Savior. This is why we celebrate this Eucharist in the name of Jesus Christ. Gathering as a community of faith that strengthens the faith of each other, we praise and glorify the God and Father who gives us life.

When Jesus returns at the end of the ages what will he find? Will he find us living and proclaiming the gospel we have received? Will he find us faithful to the gift that is ours? He will, if we support and encourage each other in faith. He will, if our faith is firmly grounded in his Word. He will, if we remain faithful to what we have learned and believed.