

Last month, I was selected for Jury Duty.

I was sort of amazed at how many people I spoke with told me ways to get out of it. After all, this is a civic duty.

The last two times I was selected for Jury Duty, I was either overseas on military deployment; or else was out of state in school.

So, I actually wanted to go to Jury Duty and see what it was all about.

The tough part was the waiting. Every day, you phone in and see if your group has been selected. By the second week, I was finally called in to court. And while I wasn't selected for Jury Duty on that particular case, I did get to witness an arraignment, and watched the whole process of jury selection.

And to be quite honest, I found the whole thing fascinating.

In the arraignment, a young man who was being held kept trying to change the subject. When asked if he could arrange to hire a lawyer within the next three weeks, he responded by saying that his mother didn't speak English. When asked the same question a second time, he said that the jail had taken his phone away.

On and on this went with the judge repeating the question, and eventually going to the trouble of having this man repeat the question word-for-word and then doing the same thing with the answer.

If I were in the judge's place ... I think I would have been frustrated by the whole thing. Yet despite the crimes this man was accused of, the judge - from what I observed - honestly appeared to want to make sure that everything was in order, and that this guy got a fair shake.

Only he just wasn't really listening. He seemed to be a million miles away, and despite his apparently dire circumstances ... he was being held in the county jail and was wearing a fluorescent jump suit ... he was visibly ... very, very ... wrapped up in himself, and seemed oblivious to his predicament.

The judge, not wanting him to get in any deeper trouble, was fastidious in making sure that he understood what was going on, and what he needed to do to avoid any further run-ins with the court ... or with the law. She put an enormous of energy into trying to get him to focus on what was happening to him right now, and what the consequences would be if he just blew things off again.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the unjust judge.

It is almost a complete one-eighty ... a mirror image ... of what I saw in court.

In the parable, the judge doesn't care. He has no fear of God ... and no respect for people. In a sense, he does what he pleases, and just blows off what is right and just.

The focus comes from the "little guy" ... or actually, the "little gal" ... a widow; who demands a just decision from this unjust judge.

And despite his lack of respect for the power he wields ... and lack of focus in applying this power ... the sheer perseverance on the part of the widow ... eventually leads him to do the right thing ... despite himself.

Saint Luke actually spells out the moral of this parable in the very first sentence of today's Gospel passage - "*the necessity ... to pray always without becoming weary.*"

Too often, for ourselves, we are wrapped up in our own thoughts and our own concerns. We can be off in left field, or perhaps somewhere lost in time ... reliving something that happened last week or last month ... or else living in the future ... running ahead to next week or next month.

But if we're going to pray always, as Jesus tells us, we need to be focused ... and we need to listen ... and we need to persevere.

In a sense, just like Moses in the first reading, it may take another person to keep us going ... to hold us up ... and to hold us accountable. We aren't going to do it on our own. We need each other.

And it takes serious effort. But we are capable of doing it.

We might prefer to sit back and let other people do the praying. [Deacon Roger or Fr. Bill] / [Fr. Andy or Bishop Cistone] let them do the heavy lifting ... after all, the Wings are playing tonight ... yet as disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to "*be persistent ... whether it is convenient or inconvenient*" as St. Paul writes to Timothy ... so that we, might "*belong to God ... [and] be competent ... [and] equipped for every good work.*"

And so, the parable of the unjust judge teaches us above all to pray always ... and this requires perseverance and focus ... which although difficult ... are within our grasp through the effects of God's grace, God's love, and God's mercy.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for a deeper spirit of prayerfulness. Let us focus on Jesus Christ especially in the Blessed Sacrament at this Mass [and during these Eucharistic Days] ... so that "*when the Son of man comes*" ... to this altar ... in this building ... in a few moments ... [today] / [this evening ... and over the next couple of days] ... He will find faith ... in our hearts ... being acted upon in our lives ... for the greater glory of God.