

## Reflection for the 18th Sunday after Trinity. 18 Luke 1: 8

When we were children there was a little statuette of a Native American, head and shoulders, with a full head dress. He was always known in the family as Injun Joe. Inscribed on the bottom were the words 'nil desperandum'. It could have been a comment on the plight of the Native Americans, but it was an advertising piece for the Carborundum company.

Jesus tells this funny little story about a feisty widow who persistently petitions a judge. Day and night she nags at him until he finally gets fed up and grants her petition simply to get rid of her. We may be tempted to try and read too much into the story. It is another example of Jesus' sense of humour, told to get the attention of His listeners, but with a serious message. This story, like that of Injun Joe, is not of importance in itself, it is simply to illustrate the importance of continuing in prayer, keeping on praying, not to despair, nil desperandum.'

And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Persisting in prayer when we feel that we are not being heard can be difficult. The temptation is to despair. Despair can be the easy option: it does not work so why bother? Giving up the struggle comes as a great relief. Those facing extreme weather, in the throws of hypothermia, have the overwhelming urge just to lie down and sleep, to give up. This is the message of Jesus' funny little story - do not give up, never despair!

We often ask: how long, just when will Jesus come again, how long before God takes control and sweeps away the evil of this world? Many have tried to answer this question and people have prophesied the end of the world. There are those who suggest that we may well just blow ourselves up in one huge nuclear explosion. The short answer is that we really do not know, it is in God's hands.

The last line of the reading, "And yet when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?" It is faith that encourages us, that demands of us that we persist in prayer. Persisting in prayer also means that we must listen as well as to ask. Perhaps to listen more than to ask.

*So, Lord grant us,  
Patience to watch, and wait, and weep,  
Though mercy long delay  
Courage our fainting souls to keep, and trust in thee. (James Montgomery)*