Prayerful Perseverance

Jesus encourages us to be steadfast in prayer.

- Jesus tells the story of a model of the faith: a woman who persists in asking for justice from an unjust judge.
- Young children model for us the persistence that Jesus describes. Just watch a 4-year-old absorbed in building with blocks!
- Today’s session invites children to experience prayer as honest conversation with God.

**Question of the Week**
What does the persistent widow teach us about prayer?

**Core Session**
- Getting Started *(stuffed animal)*
- Gospel Story: The Woman who Asked Again and Again
- What Can You Hear? Game *(keys, a ball, a rock, a cushion, a book, a bell, etc.)*
- Praying Together

**Enrichment**
- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Movement: Are You Listening? Fingerplay
- Craft: Prayer Poster *(poster board, paper towels, pan, tempera paint)*
- Art: Cordero’s Storyteller and Children
- Info: Art and Artist
- Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

**Helps for Catechists**
- More About Today’s Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- The World of the Bible: A Just Judge

Scripture
Luke 18:1-8
 Getting Started (5-15 minutes)

Ask volunteers to take turns using the stuffed animals or dolls to enact a roleplay between a parent and child. Each roleplay should discuss the item the child has drawn. Ask the child to make the parent doll give reasons why the child should or should not get what is wanted.

For example, you could initiate a roleplay by saying, “Juanita wants a two-wheel bicycle. Should she get one?” The child can make the parent doll say, “No, she doesn’t have any place to ride a two-wheeler,” or, “Yes, she needs a new bike.”

Encourage as many children as possible to give their answers. Then tell the children that a woman in today’s story wanted something very much, too.

 Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)

The Woman Who Asked Again and Again

Story Game Focus: As you tell this story, you can use simple gestures to suggest the actions and reactions of the man and the woman. You can knock on the floor to suggest knocking on a door; you can put your hands on your hips as the woman makes her request; and you can shake your head no as the man turns her away.

Once a woman wanted help very much. She went to the house of a man who was supposed to help her. “Will you help me?” said the woman. “That’s your job!”

“No,” said the man. “I won’t.”

Every day the woman went to that man. Every day the woman asked, “What do you say? Will you help me today?”

Every day, the man said, “No, I say, not today.”

The woman asked the man for help again and again, every day, for weeks and weeks. Finally, one day the woman said, “What do you say? Will you help me today?”

And the man, who was getting tired of her asking the same question, said, “Yes, I say, I will help you today.”

After Jesus told that story, he said, “Do you think God is like the man in the story? No! When we call out to God for help, night or day, God helps us right away!”

After the Story: You can invite children to experiment right away with talking spontaneously to God, affirming that God listens carefully to us when we pray. Children might like to call out, “Hello, God!” and other simple greetings.

 What Can You Hear? Game (5-15 minutes)

This game will help the children to understand that, although we may not hear everything, God hears everything. Ask the children to sit facing away from you. Tell them you will drop things on the floor, one by one. (Collect some noisy and quiet items: keys, a ball, a rock, a cushion, a book, a bell, etc.) If the children hear a sound they stand up and guess what made the sound. If they don’t hear a sound they remain seated.

After you have dropped several items, let the children take turns dropping them. After the game talk about which items could be heard. Stress that God hears everything—the birds, the animals, street noises, farm machinery and all people everywhere.

 Praying Together (5 minutes)

If children made a poster in today’s Craft: Prayer Poster activity (p. 3), gather children around it.

Read aloud to the children several times the title: Hear us, Lord. Help them repeat this prayer with you several times. Once more, invite the children’s spontaneous prayers by asking:

◆ What would we like to say to God this day?

To each prayer help the children respond:

◆ Hear us, Lord.

Close by praying:

◆ Thank you, God, for listening to us this day and always. Thank you for hearing all our prayers. Amen.

Note: Distribute this week’s At Home with the Good News to group members as they depart (or e-mail it to families after the session).
Discover the Good News

(5-10 minutes)
On page 1 of today’s Discover the Good News you’ll find a rhymed version of today’s story. This is the version used in the Are You Listening Fingerplay used below.

On page 2 you’ll find illustrations of children praying. Use the page to lead a simple discussion with the children on prayer:
◆ These children are praying to God.
◆ What do you think they are saying?

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News, sing together:
◆ “Kum Ba Yah” (songbook p. 9)
◆ “Keep On Prayin’” (songbook p. 11, also available as an MP3)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

As you sing Kum Ba Yah, you might use the children’s names for the verse, “Someone’s praying”; for example:
◆ Zach is praying, Lord...
◆ Mija’s praying, Lord...

Movement (5-15 minutes)
Are You Listening? Fingerplay
This simple fingerplay affirms that God hears us when we pray. Teach children the words and motions of this song, sung to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?”:

Are you listening?
Are you listening?
Cup hands around ears.

When we pray?
When we pray?
Fold hands in prayer.

God says, “Yes, I hear you,
God says, “Yes, I hear you,
Cup hands around mouth.

“When you pray;
“When you pray.”
Fold hands in prayer.

Craft (10-20 minutes)
Prayer Poster
Children make a poster of prayers and decorate it with pictures of praying hands.

Across the top of a sheet of poster board, write “Hear Us, Lord.” Make large stamp pads by placing two to three paper towels in each pie plate. Soak each pad with one color of tempera paint. Invite the children to fill the poster with prayers to God. Read aloud the title, then ask:
◆ What would you like to say to God today?

Encourage each child to say whatever they like to God. Children may contribute questions, greetings or even silliness:
◆ Hi, God.
◆ How old are you, God?
◆ You’re an alligator, God!

Some children may be angry at God, and express that anger in this activity. Don’t censor the children’s prayers; remember that God blessed Job for his honest, angry prayer. Use the children’s exact words when you write down their prayers.

Write each child’s prayer under the poster title. Be sure to add your own short prayer, too. Then show each child how to make a praying-hand print by pressing his or her flattened hand—palm down and fingers together—first onto a stamp pad, and then onto the poster. You can use the finished poster in today’s Praying Together activity.
Art (10-15 minutes)

**Cordero’s Storyteller and Children**

Gather children around the poster of Helen Cordero’s pottery figure *Storyteller and Children*, attached to this document.

Invite children to show you who is telling a story. Ask them to show you who is listening to a story.

Invite children to practice telling and listening to a story from the Bible. Explain that when we hear a story from the Bible during the Eucharist, the story reader ends by saying, “The Word of the Lord.” We all answer, “Thanks be to God.” Practice this phrase and response with the children.

Then use the phrase and response with a verse from today’s scripture; for example, “Jesus told his disciples that they should always pray.” Help the children repeat this phrase with you, then end with the prayer and response: “The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.”

Repeat several times, helping the children learn how to say the verse and response in chorus.

**Art and Artist**

Pueblo potter Helen Cordero didn’t even begin to work in clay until she was a grown woman in her late forties. Furthermore, she had no success in making the traditional bowls and containers of her people. Instead she began producing tiny animals and figures of people. Her first commissioned work was a 250-piece Nativity set of such figures. Her famous storyteller statues honor her grandfather, Santiago Quintana, who loved to tell stories to his grandchildren. Her work conveys at a glance the gifts of storytelling: how it transmits tradition, creates community and nourishes hearts and minds together.

**Young Children and the Gospel**

Today’s gospel tells the parable of the widow who beseeches a judge to help her. The judge ignores the woman’s pleas but finally consents to help because of her persistence. Jesus comments that God, unlike the judge, hears our prayers and is quick to judge in our favor.

Today’s session is the second of three sessions designed to help preschoolers explore prayer. In the session for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, children explored prayers of thanksgiving. In today’s session, the children explore spontaneous prayers, and hear affirmations that God hears all our prayers.

Children develop more confidence that God hears them when they experience the faith formation setting as a place where they are heard. Focused, attentive listening is an especially good skill for catechists of young children to develop. We develop these skills when we:

- do not divide our attention between listening and other tasks
- look children in the eye as we listen and respond to their talk
- accept what children say as an accurate presentation of their real feelings

**Where You’ll Find Everything Else**

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures.*
  - A printable version of today’s *Gospel Story* for use at home (to distribute or e-mail to families).
  - Instructions for a *Puppet Mother May I Game* for use as a story-review activity.
  - Two helpful articles for catechists on classroom management: *Preventive Discipline* and *Time Out.*
  - Cordero’s *Storyteller and Children,* to be used in today’s Art activity.
  - A family paper, *At Home with the Good News,* to print and distribute or to e-mail to families for use at home.
- Open your Fall-C Seasonal *Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
  - Information on Fall-C’s *Models of the Faith.*
  - A helpful article why *Using Music in Faith Formation* enhances religious education.
  - An article for catechists that takes a closer look at *The Psalms.*
  - A PowerPoint Presentation for catechists titled *Join Hands, Give Thanks* that explores the role of migrant workers in American culture.
  - The *Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News.*
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings encourage us to seek intimacy with God through scripture study and constant prayer. In Exodus, God’s people gain the victory over the Amalekites through Moses’ intercession. In 2 Timothy, Paul commends the use of “the sacred writings” for growth in the faith. In the gospel parable, Jesus illustrates how, unlike an unjust judge, God welcomes our persistent prayers and quickly gives justice.

Exodus 17:8-13
The Amalekites, a nomadic people who lived in the Sinai peninsula and the Negev desert, eventually became one of Israel’s most persistent enemies. Here the author of Exodus records Israel’s first encounter with these people.

In defending themselves against the Amalekite attack, Joshua leads the battle while Moses prays for God’s victory. According to the account, Moses’ prayer with uplifted hands, not Joshua’s might, ensured the victory.

Prayer was often offered with raised hands in many pagan cultures, in Israel’s history and in the early Church. Here Moses recognizes that the battle belonged to the Lord.

2 Timothy 3:14–4:2
This reading stresses the stabilizing role of tradition, both the teaching handed down through generations in the family and in the Christian community, and the written tradition preserved in scripture (3:16), which then meant the Old Testament.

Scripture is “inspired by God” (v. 16), that is, God’s life-giving Spirit has been breathed into it. It is thus a positive source for Christian teaching, useful to refute error, to identify sin, to direct people back to the right path and to sustain them on their way.

Luke 18:1-8
This story is found only in Luke. The unjust judge is someone whose concerns are all worldly, centered in this age and characterized by self-interest and evil.

The judge’s behavior is not commended; rather a comparison is made by arguing in rabbinic fashion from lesser to more: if even the unrighteous judge will bestir himself to vindicate the widow, how much more will God act to vindicate God’s elect. Though God acts “quickly,” unlike the judge, God’s speed often seems slow to humans.

Luke’s introduction to the parable (v. 1) shifts attention from the judge to the widow, and from assurance of the speedy second coming to an exhortation to persistent prayer until its arrival, however delayed. In the Old Testament world, the widow is the epitome of those who are especially vulnerable, having no power, wealth or influence, and so are under God’s special protection.
Reflection
In some religious circles, it is popular to issue blanket condemnations of our culture: every institution—from the government to sports to church—is corrupt. The wary Christian must steer clear of such treacherous potholes in the surefire shot to sanctity.

A parable like today’s shows Jesus using an equally corrupt culture, his own, as the springboard for teaching—and a chuckle. The judge could be a comic character, and has probably starred in the smirking skits of numerous youth groups. His concession to the persistent woman is pure cornball: I’ll give in not for any holy motive, but just to get rid of her!

Let’s not make the mistake of aligning the judge with God. Let’s concentrate instead on the widow’s strategy. She doesn’t waste time blaming an unjust structure for her predicament.

Instead, she clarifies what she wants. Then, little by little, even on rainy days, she inches towards her goal. She maintains her dignity, is happy with small increments and, like erosion over time, she wears down the judge.

The last two verses are the interpretation given the parable by the early Church. What application might our era add? Perhaps this: when waiting on God proves tedious and when the answer to prayer takes forever, keep inching. Persist.

The Scriptures and the Catechism
We call God’s special involvement in the composition of scripture divine inspiration (CCC, #105–08). As a genuine mystery of faith, this doctrine is not a psychological explanation of how inspiration takes place in the mind of the human author. Rather it affirms our belief that God was working with the author to produce the book that God wanted. The readings also begin a series of reflections on prayer, focusing on our need for persistence (CCC, #2098, 2559–65, 2725–45) in asking for what we need from God (CCC, #2629–33).

The World of the Bible
A Just Judge
The Jewish people believed that, though in this life the rich and powerful control wealth and power and often act unjustly, nevertheless God will advocate the rights of the humble and poor.

Since the wealthy and powerful not only wrote the laws but also decided cases, judges, who were supposed to be impartial, were usually susceptible to bribes to decide a case in someone’s favor.

For the poor, who did not have the wealth to influence court decisions, the hope of ever getting a “just judge” who would show no favoritism was improbable.

But they always hoped that God, who could not be bribed or controlled, would be the ultimate God of justice because God was always on the side of the poor and the vulnerable to right wrongs and establish justice.

Thus God’s justice is a response to the persistent prayers of the humble, those who serve faithfully but who also understand that true justice comes from God alone.