

“The Strong Embrace of God”
Saint Michael and All Angels
October 21, 2007

Texts:
Genesis 32
Luke 18:1-8

Jesus came to the disciples one day and said:

“Pray always and never lose heart.”

Does that sound like an important bidding? It should, because you and I can find ourselves,

In trouble,
Confused,
Worried,
Confronting difficult school work,
Dealing with mean-spirited people.

Any day of the week you and I can run into conflict!

And in these situations, prayer can give us tenacity and perseverance.

Jesus is teaching us that there is a big difference between

- the struggles and conflicts we have in the world, and
- the strong embrace of God

Our Old Testament Lesson (Genesis 32:3-8, 22-30)
is a story about Jacob fighting and struggling with others throughout his life – by trickery and deceit he steals both his brother’s birthright and blessing.

Ridden with fear, guilt and anxiety, he meets up with God at the river Jabbok.

What did he learn in this meeting?

That God’s strong embrace can turn struggle into love.

God held Jacob so that he could begin to confess, to see life differently, to say he was sorry, to be forgiven and seek to be friends again with his brother Esau.

Years ago, the Archbishop of Paris stood in the pulpit of Notre Dame Cathedral one Sunday morning and described a most dramatic epic thirty years prior. “It seems that three young tourists had come into the cathedral. They were rough, rude and cynical and they got into a fight in the back.

The wise old Monsignor as penance took those roughnecks into the chapel, and had them stand before the crucifix, look into the face of Jesus and say out loud – ‘all this you did for me? It’s nothing but a farce, prayer is just words in the air, you mean nothing to me and I don’t care.’ He was never able to finish the lines – this painful experience changed his life and he is standing before you now.”

In the presence of God, in the power of prayer, our struggle can be turned into a strong embrace of love and reconciliation.