

Persistence

In the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*, the character of Andy is wrongly convicted of murder. He is sentenced to two life sentences and is incarcerated in the notoriously harsh Shawshank Prison.

Andy works in the prison library which has very few resources except for some old tattered books and magazines. He begins a campaign to improve and expand the library. He approaches the prison warden for funds. The warden is reluctant to spend taxpayers' hard earned money on luxuries for convicted criminals. Andy is not deterred. So, he asks the warden's permission to write to the State Senate for funds. Convinced that it is a waste of time, the warden promises to personally mail the letters.

Andy sets about sending one letter a week to the Senate, asking for assistance, believing that they can't ignore him forever.

It takes six years. But to Andy's amazement boxes of books are delivered to the prison, together with a cheque for \$200. A note is attached from the Senate stating that they now consider the matter closed!

Some of the prison officers are surprised that Andy's persistence has paid off. Andy becomes even more determined. He begins to write two letters a week!

The State realises that they can't buy Andy off with just \$200 and a few boxes of books. So, in the hope of silencing him, the state approves an annual payment of \$500.

Andy made that \$500 stretch as far as it would go. He did deals with book clubs and charity groups. The library was refurbished and it became *the* place to be. It was the best prison library in all of New England.

Despite the desperate situation he found himself in and all the obstacles in his way, Andy never gave up. His determination, his persistence and his commitment were rewarded.

In today's gospel, we have another person in a desperate situation, with all sorts of cultural and social obstacles standing in her way.

A Canaanite woman, a descendant of one of the ancient enemies of Israel, approaches Jesus but is initially not welcomed. Still she persists in her request.

She is a mother and her daughter is suffering. Naturally she is bold and tenacious when the life of a loved one is at stake. She refuses to be put off or give up.

Although rebuffed by the disciples and ignored by Jesus, her sheer persistence has surprising results. Her persistence is seen by Jesus as evidence of great faith. He relents and heals her daughter.

Sometimes we struggle with persistence. We can give up when things become difficult. We can lose hope when things don't turn out as we planned. We can even stop praying when we don't get what we ask for.

Whatever our situation, let us be persistent in our efforts, never giving up, and recognising that God is with us through it all.