I find myself feeling a real sense of dread about waking up the morning of Nov. 9—just 27 days from now. And that feeling doesn't depend on who gets elected. Do you know what I mean, Church?

Yesterday was the feast of St. Teresa of Avila, a primary patron of the IHM Sisters. Teresa founded 17 monasteries, she was the author of four books, she was a reformer of her religious community (the Carmelites) and a mystic. All in an era supposedly very much under the control of men.

Here’s something she wrote:

If Christ Jesus dwells in us as a friend and noble leader, then we can endure all things, for Christ helps and strengthens us and never abandons us. He is a true friend. And I clearly see that if we expect to receive an abundance of his graces, God desires that these graces must come to us from the hands of Christ, through his most sacred humanity, in which God takes delight.

All three readings today talk about persistence in prayer—and what that means. Timothy is told: “Be persistent whether is it convenient or inconvenient.” There is the image of Moses’ persistence … with a little help from his friends. And Jesus tells a story about “the necessity of praying always, without becoming weary.”

I don’t know about you, but sometimes my prayer seems like the phone call we’ve all made to a big company for help. First you get passed on to about three different people. Then you get a message that says all our agents are busy, please hold. Then you get that really irritating music.

What does it really mean to be persistent?

One thing that comes to mind is the Grand Canyon. If you’ve seen it you know how awesome it is. It’s the result of that river at the very bottom over the course of millions of years very slowly, but surely slicing a magnificent path through some very hard rock. That awesome sight would not exist if it were not for the persistence of the river. Doing what it does best, just flowing along.

I think of the line from the movie, *Shawshank Redemption*: “All it takes is time and pressure.”
There is this tendency to listen to the Gospel parable and think that the judge represents God and the woman, the rest of us. I saw a suggestion about seeing the woman in the story as God-like. From this perspective the message is still about the importance of persistence, but the persistent one is now that one who — often against all odds — keeps resisting injustice, keeps renouncing discrimination, keeps opposing bigotry in all its dimensions.

From this perspective the point of prayer is not to keep pestering an uncaring God. The real point of prayer is to keep us attuned to the heart of God and God's project for a renewed world: to keep the dream clear, to keep hope high, to fan into flame the desire for justice and compassion. The purpose of prayer is to break out from a blindness that sees only what's familiar, to look outside the box, to discern where the Spirit of God is quietly at work in our world today.

I saw the movie Sully on Friday. What a testimony to what happens when great skill, humility and a profound sense of human interdependence all come together. Talk about persistence.

A word about the upcoming election, in light of all we've just heard. It is so critical that we ask this question: Which candidate speaks about plans—a vision for promoting the most a consistent ethic of life—from when life begins to when it ends and everything in between? As Sister Joan Chittister suggests, to have a consistent life ethic you have to be much more than pro-birth.

I think that's a vision worth being very persistent about. That can only come about, as Teresa of Avila says, “If Christ Jesus dwells in us as friend and noble leader.”

This is World Mission Sunday for the universal Church. Pope Francis keeps reminding us all that the Mission is Mercy. We are all ambassadors of the mercy of God. This Eucharistic ritual is meant to enable us to keep the dream clear, to keep hope high and to fan into flame the desire for justice and compassion.