

Dear Friends,

Last Thursday, NASA's rover named *Perseverance* successfully touched down on Mars. Soon after the landing, awe-inspiring pictures were sent to earth. In addition, sounds from Mars were recorded and relayed back to eagerly listening ears. The purpose of the mission is to search for signs of ancient life on the planet. Notably, it could take years and possibly decades of research to evaluate and determine the findings. The project required billions of dollars and a team of hundreds of people working for close to ten years. I think we can agree that the Perseverance mission has required – and will require – an abundance of perseverance.

This remarkable feat prompted me to think about the word *perseverance*. I (naturally!) consulted my trusty thesaurus and found these synonyms: *persistence, tenacity, determination, resolve, resoluteness, staying power, purposefulness, patience, endurance, diligence, dedication, commitment, doggedness, steadfastness, tirelessness, indefatigability, and stamina*.

Does the word perseverance and any of its synonyms speak to you? Where have you shown perseverance? Where do you need perseverance? Where have you seen perseverance? Where would you like to see perseverance?

Perseverance is a quality needed for so many endeavors and situations. Truly, we have all needed perseverance these past 11 months as we faced the pandemic's unfolding challenges and sorrows. Moreover, as increased vaccinations bring relief, protection, good health, and hopefulness, we are aware that we still need to persevere in maintaining safe practices and precautionary measures.

For Christians, perseverance is born of faith in Jesus Christ. The writer of the book of Hebrews has given us this inspiring exhortation:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 12:1-2a

For our many races, struggles, and pursuits, let us look to Jesus for encouragement, power, and faith. And let us pray the prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas throughout the season of Lent, and perhaps throughout our lives:

*Grant me, my God
a mind to know you,
a heart to seek you,
wisdom to find you,
conduct that pleases you,
perseverance to wait for you,
and the hope of embracing you
when everything ends. Amen.*

Yours in perseverance and faith,
Jane