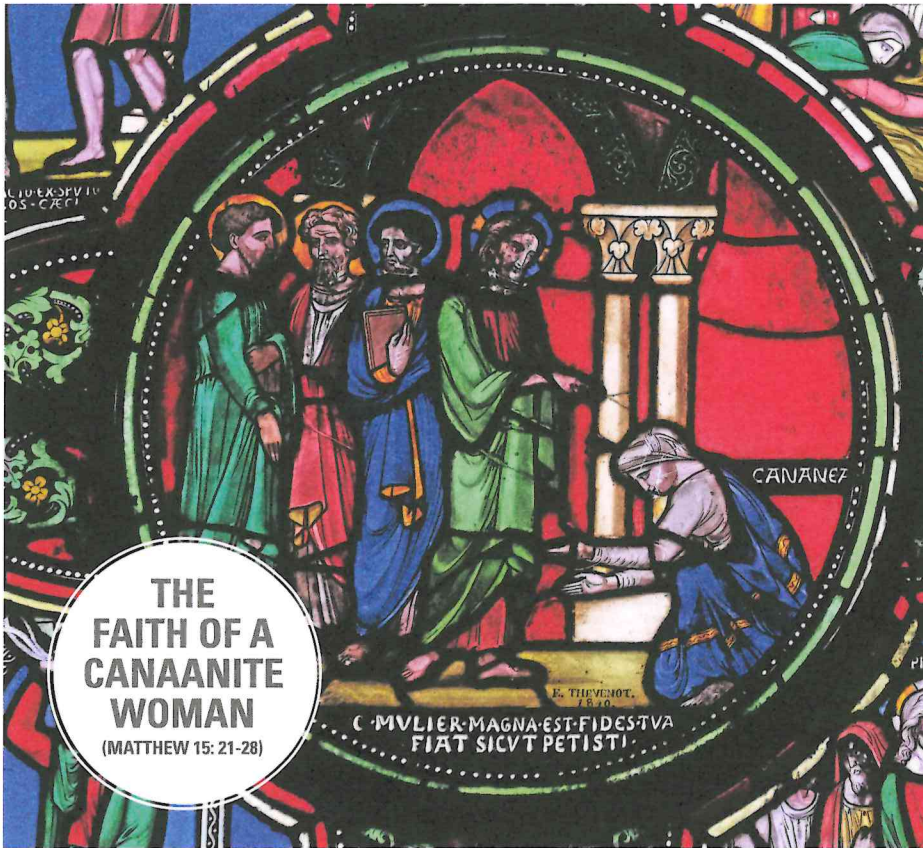


Sunday Message

20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 20 August 2023 • Psalter Week 4



THE FAITH OF A CANAANITE WOMAN (MATTHEW 15: 21-28)

The Canaanite woman approaches Jesus and due to her persistence, the disciples are keen that she is sent away. In their eyes, there is no good to be done for this woman.

This Gospel story might be considered confusing or contradictory for us believers. When have we ever witnessed Jesus respond to a request with silence? Probably never. There is even a harsh reference made by Jesus when he equates the Canaanite woman to the dogs in the street who are given scraps of food meant for deserving children. But the key to this Gospel is the persistence of the woman and her unwavering faith in Jesus' power to heal.

There are many theories as to the meaning behind Jesus' actions and behaviour in this story. One conclusion from commentator Bishop Robert Barron is that Jesus is not testing this woman in a negative way. He is testing her in order that she might know how great her faith is. He is preparing her to receive the gift he wants to give her. Indeed Jesus gives the daughter of the Canaanite woman the gift of healing she so greatly needs. ■

DO

Prayer is at the heart of everything we do in the Church. Take some time this week to meditate on the mystery of God's loving and compassionate presence in the world. Use a short passage from the Gospels to help you if you wish.



LEARN

'Pray constantly . . . always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.'
(1 Thess 5:17)

'For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.'
(St. Thérèse of Lisieux)

SAY

'Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you. Amen.'

(St. Thomas Aquinas)

REFLECT

Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a famous book over forty years ago called, *When Bad things Happen to Good People*. The international bestseller, attempted to look at why there is suffering in the world and why people of faith have to endure such hardship and tragedy in their lives. As a young dad, Harold had to cope with the tragedy of the death of his first born child. It was a very difficult time in his life and forced him to revisit everything he had been taught, mainly that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. Some people asked him at the time if he thought the death of his child was part of God's plan? But Harold replied, 'If that were God's plan, it's a bad bargain. I don't want to have to deal with a God like that.' So he came up with two conclusions after much prayer and reflection. He said, 'God was all-powerful in the beginning but God chose to designate two areas of life off-limits to his power. He would not interfere with laws of nature and secondly, he would not take away our freedom to choose between good and evil.'

We can possibly identify with the Canaanite woman's situation in today's Gospel. Her daughter is very sick and she asks Jesus for healing. The response from Jesus is not immediate. As a matter of fact, she is greeted with silence. Have you ever been in the same situation? You pray for something, a miracle perhaps, a healing for a family member or neighbour, and nothing happens. It is one of the greatest challenges we face in our faith. The Canaanite woman perseveres for she knows that God listens with compassion and love. We pray for the same gift of faith and perseverance in our own lives. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Turn your eyes, O God, our shield;
And look on the face of your anointed one;
one day within your courts
is better than a thousand elsewhere.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who have prepared for those who
love you
good things which no eye can see,
fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of
your love,
so that, loving you in all things and above all
things,
we may attain your promises,
which surpass every human desire.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord: Have a care for justice,
act with integrity, for soon my salvation will
come and my integrity be manifest.
Foreigners who have attached themselves
to the Lord to serve him and to love his
name and be his servants – all who observe
the sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to
my covenant – these I will bring to my holy
mountain. I will make them joyful in my
house of prayer. Their holocausts and their
sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my
house will be called a house of prayer for all
the peoples.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 66(67):2-3, 5-6, 8

Response:

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the
peoples praise you.

- O God, be gracious and bless us
and let your face shed its light upon us.
So will your ways be known upon earth
and all nations learn your saving help. (R.)

- Let the nations be glad and exult
for you rule the world with justice.
With fairness you rule the peoples,
you guide the nations on earth. (R.)
- Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
May God still give us his blessing till the
ends of the earth revere him. (R.)

SECOND READING Roman 11:13-15, 29-32

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Romans.

Let me tell you pagans this: I have been
sent to the pagans as their apostle, and I am
proud of being sent, but the purpose of it
is to make my own people envious of you,
and in this way save some of them. Since
their rejection meant the reconciliation of the
world, do you know what their admission will
mean? Nothing less than a resurrection from
the dead! God never takes back his gifts or
revokes his choice.

Just as you changed from being
disobedient to God, and now enjoy mercy
because of their disobedience, so those who
are disobedient now – and only because of
the mercy shown to you – will also enjoy
mercy eventually. God has imprisoned all
men in their own disobedience only to show
mercy to all mankind.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! The sheep that belong to
me listen to my voice, says the Lord,
I know them and they follow me. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 15:21-28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

Jesus left Gennesaret and withdrew to the
region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came
a Canaanite woman from that district and
started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity
on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.'
But he answered her not a word. And his
disciples went and pleaded with him. 'Give
her what she wants,' they said, 'because
she is shouting after us.' He said in reply, 'I
was sent only to the lost sheep of the House
of Israel.' But the woman had come up and
was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord,' she said,
'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the
children's food and throw it to the house-
dogs.' She retorted, 'Ah yes, sir; but even
house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from
their master's table.' Then Jesus answered
her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your
wish be granted.' And from that moment her
daughter was well again.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,

begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive our oblation, O Lord,
by which is brought about a glorious
exchange,
that, by offering what you have given,
we may merit to receive your very self.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

With the Lord there is mercy;
in him is plentiful redemption.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Made partakers of Christ through these
Sacraments,
we humbly implore your mercy, Lord,
that, conformed to his image on earth,
we may merit also to be his coheirs in
heaven.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

"Do not grieve over temptations you
suffer. When the Lord intends to bestow
a particular virtue on us, He often permits
us first to be tempted by the opposite vice.
Therefore, look upon every temptation as an
invitation to grow in a particular virtue and
promise God that you will be successful, if
only you stand fast."

St Philip Neri