

The Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year A –
19/20 August 2017 – (Tallmadge Circle Fest – 8/19) –
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community –
Homily

1st Reading:

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

- “Observe what is right, do what is just; for my salvation is about to come, my justice, about to be revealed. The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, . . . and becoming his servants -- . . . them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; . . . for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 67 - *Sung*

2nd Reading:

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

- “I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I glory in my ministry in order to make my race jealous and thus save some of them. . . . For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. . . .”

GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 15:21-28

- “. . . a Canaanite woman . . . called out, “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon.” But Jesus did not say a word in answer to her. Jesus’ disciples came and asked him, “Send her away, . . .” “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But the woman came and did Jesus homage, . . . “Lord, help me.” . . . “It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.” Then Jesus . . . “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And the woman’s daughter was healed from that hour.”

i. For those who are blessed and able to participate in weekday Mass . . . you will recall that this very Gospel was heard a little over a week ago . . . and, if you're wondering if I am going to share something different this weekend . . . different from a little over a week ago . . . well . . . yes . . . to some extent . . . but be patient . . . as we need to catch-up the others . . .

And, that catching up is probably stating the obvious thought we all have on hearing this Gospel: "Just what the heck got into Jesus? Is this the Jesus I know? Is he having a bad day?"

A simple answer to these questions would be: Nothing "got into Jesus". He was simply responding, at least initially, as a faithful son of Israel would have responded to the Canaanite woman . . . to the gentile. While Jesus uses the metaphor of "dogs" in reference to the woman's ethnicity and culture . . . keep in mind that the gentiles also used that same metaphor when speaking of the Jews. So, "yes" . . . this is very much the Jesus you and I know . . . **human and divine!**

But, lest we get stuck here and think for a moment we have found Jesus' Achilles' heal . . . there is something critical to this encounter that is missed . . . overlooked . . .

As we know . . . the Israelites believed in one God . . . the Canaanites believed in multiple Gods . . . but, the foil here is in fact what the woman reveals about **her** belief . . . **“Son of David”**, she calls out . . . something that would have meaning only for the Israelites . . . who held David in high esteem and connected this to their belief in the **“Messiah-to-come”** . . . She goes on from there . . . calling Jesus, **“Lord”** . . . and for the Evangelist Matthew, this always equated to an explicit admission that **“Jesus and God are one!”** Without a doubt . . . she believed Jesus to be the Savior . . . something his own had still **not** come to accept let alone believe . . .

II. Yes . . . it certainly appears that Jesus was influenced in his humanity by the culture of the day . . . albeit . . . for a brief part of this encounter . . . **but** this Canaanite woman was not going to allow that to get in the way . . . **she** believed . . . believed what Jesus’ own did not . . . and Jesus now knew that . . . Jesus now understood that **“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And the woman’s daughter was healed from that hour.”**

Seeing the woman’s faith . . . **receiving** this woman’s faith . . . now . . . **now**, not only did Jesus see something different in her and about her . . . now, he recognized the need let others know how they, too, must respond and act

differently . . . moving beyond whatever prejudices they carry . . . cultural or otherwise . . . prejudices . . . built on ignorance rather than knowledge and understanding . . . Yes . . . **now** . . . Jesus receipt of and acceptance of the Canaanite woman's faith made clear to all that bias and prejudice have no place in the Kingdom he proclaimed . . . not then . . . not now.

And don't forget the witness of that woman . . . the woman who let nothing stand in the way of offering her **belief** . . . not her race or ethnicity . . . not her status in life . . . not her sins . . . not her rejection by others . . . no . . . she pushed beyond all of that . . . "**Son of David, have pity on me!**" . . . As we come forward this day . . . may we push beyond all that holds us back from not only proclaiming Jesus as Lord . . . but seeing others as the Lord sees them . . . and may our "**Amen**" be more than a polite response . . . may it be a declaration of not only **what** we believe and **who** we believe in . . . but what and who we passionately want to become!