

My Dear Friends of St. Joseph Parish,



I don't know about you, but today's Gospel contains my most common prayer. I pray it more often than the *Our Father*. It is the simple prayer, "**Help me, Lord.**" I say it in the morning as I think about the coming day. And I find myself saying it often in the course of the day.

Interestingly enough, the prayer was expressed by a non-Jewish woman - a Canaanite. She lived in the sea coast region, just outside of Israel. When Jesus came into that territory, something about him caused her to place her trust in him - and ask for a favor, the healing of her tormented daughter. She got a negative response - and the disciples wanted to brush her off, but she did not give up. She kept saying, "Lord, help me."

This beautiful woman gives a lesson in respectful perseverance. An early bishop named **John Chrysostom** used to remind his congregation about the man paralyzed 38 years before Jesus cured him. Perhaps, he said, you have not spent 38 years bound by some vice - anger, lust, laziness or some other spiritual paralysis. "Just so," said John Chrysostom, "if you keep asking with faith in your Redeemer, you also will receive healing."

The Canaanite woman did not have to wait 38 years, but she did have to keep asking with faith, "Help me, Lord." And Jesus did answer her plea.

St. Vincent de Paul relates that when he was a young man, he was always gloomy and critical. He realized that his lack of amiability would keep people away from him. So young Vincent prayed that God would



give him a kind heart and pleasing way of treating others. And with a smile, he said, "I have to admit that my prayer has been answered well." If we keep asking - like St. Vincent, like the Canaanite woman - God will answer our prayer. Now, we might not always recognize the answer because - as a wise man observed - God often disguises the answer as hard work.

The Canaanite woman gives us an example: she knew what she wanted - the healing of her child. She did not get discouraged, even in the face of put downs. And she heard from Jesus those wonderful words, "Great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish."

Have a Blessed Week!

Fr. Rafal Ligenza

Fr. Rafal Ligenza, Administrator