

### **Have Pity on me, Lord**

Today's Gospel tells of a Canaanite woman whose daughter was possessed by a demon; a woman in need, coming to Jesus seeking His assistance, calling out to him, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! Ironically, Jesus' "no response" would seem to indicate that he is unwilling to offer her His assistance. It seems equally troubling that the apostles too are asking Jesus permission to "send her away" thinking of her as bothersome. When Jesus responds, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," it seems to reinforce any suspected unwillingness on his part. But she continues to persist. Even after the woman comes and pays him homage and pleads "Lord help me", his third response seems rather offensive, "It is not right to take the food of children and throw it to the dogs." Such humiliation! But the woman does not give up. She replies, "Even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." Such faith! Such perseverance.

This story can seem a little perplexing at first. Matthew's depiction of Jesus in this story seems to contradict everything we know about Jesus and the Christian principle of "Love thy neighbor as thyself." You might even ask why this woman is being made an example. Suffice it to say Jesus is testing the woman. He does not want us to come to him only when we are in trouble or in need. He wants us to pursue Him wholeheartedly for who He is. So we should not be surprised at Jesus' initial resistance to her. He uses this situation, in a public setting, to probe and reveal her true and unwavering faith. The type of faith that he desires in all of us.

Comparing this story with life today and in our own lives, we too can find ourselves as being an "outcast" at times. There may be people in our lives that do not talk to us for one reason or another. There may be people who are unhelpful, ones that avoid going out of their way to assist you with a particular request. We may also encounter others that are rather rude, being short or even derogatory to us in their response. But we should note the Canaanite woman's perseverance and courage. She knows that Jesus is the answer. She does not waiver when undergoing the scrutiny of others. She remains focused on receiving help from the Source that she knows can bring healing to her daughter.

Likewise, we too should follow her example. It is through an unwavering belief in Christ that will help us through the times we feel all alone, being the outcast. Times that we are the subject of ridicule or rudeness. By keeping our focus on the true Source of our life, despite our obstacles, will not our Lord then recognize the faith in our hearts?

Deacon Greg Maynerich