

The Church of Saint Boniface
August 16, 2020
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time



"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.

(Mat 15, 28)

FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

Guest Reflection Food for Dogs?

Sunday's Gospel can give a headache both to preachers and to people in the pews. Jesus refuses to hear a woman because she is, in his metaphor, one of the "dogs." OUCH.

You know the story. The Canaanite woman cries out for help and Jesus at first will not even talk to her. The disciples demand that he send her away because she is a trouble-maker, and he seems to agree with them. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," he says.

She is from Canaan, not Israel.

Finally the poor woman walks right up, does "homage" to Jesus and says, "Lord, help me." Jesus would never ignore such words, at least so we Christians and Catholics believe. Nor should we ever be deaf to words like this in our own daily lives.

However, he says to her, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs."

Ouch indeed. This is the line that is so hard for us to understand. So un-Jesus-like.

There are clues. She first called out to him with the words "Son of David." This is a term hallowed by use in the ancient Hebrew scriptures, always referring to the Messiah. She is a Canaanite, and they did not believe in any Messiah-to-come, especially not one that would descend from David. Yet this woman, against her whole background, seems to have belief in Jesus as Messiah.

She calls him "Lord." In Matthew's Gospel this is an explicit admission that Jesus and God are one. Going just on her language, this is proof that she believed in him as the Savior.

Surely he sensed this.

But Israelites and Canaanites had long been in strife. How could "they" with their strange gods produce a woman who believes in the one God and in Jesus as the Christ? Is it possible that Jesus was drawing her out, teasing her in order to strengthen her belief? Perhaps he was quoting the word "dogs" as a reference to names the two peoples called each other. Something like this: "my people of Israel believe in the one God and your people do not. How can I give their food to you 'dogs,' as we call you?"

The woman's quick wit provides a wonderful, humble, bantering response that wins the day. "Even dogs eat scraps that fall from their master's table," she says. It is a riposte, a parry, a counter-thrust, and Jesus loves it. She is saying, "It does not matter what a person's status is as long as they believe. And I do believe."

I'll bet Jesus smiled a great smile as he told her how great her faith was. Maybe he laughed at her fast repartee. And of course he gladly gave her what she asked; he cured her daughter.

Doesn't Christ's Holy Spirit smile within you and me when we ask for what we need? When we let nothing stand in the way, like our own origins, our status in life, our sins, and maybe even our rejection by others?

Remember when we approached Communion and held out our hands and said in effect, "Son of David, have pity on me." This is a paraphrase of the Canaanite woman. Our response is "Amen," which means "I do believe," just like the woman.

Let us mean it this Sunday, whether we attend a virtual or a real Mass.

— Father John Foley, SJ

Doesn't Christ's Holy Spirit smile within you and me when we ask for what we need?



OUR SUMMER SCHEDULE ENDS
AFTER LABOR DAY WEEKEND.

Beginning Sept 12/13:

4:00 PM Saturday Vigil Mass

8:00 AM & 10:30 AM Sunday Masses

MASS INTENTIONS

Aug 22	4:00 PM	Robert Tremblay , by Edith Carey
Sept. 6	9:00 AM	John McShane , by his wife

CONDOLENCES to the family of Leon C. Tarbell Jr. who passed away on Sunday, August 9, 2020. May he rest in peace.

SUMMER MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday 4:00 p.m. | Sunday 7:30 a.m. & 9:00 a.m.
8:00 Morning Mass Wednesday, Thursday and Friday



Elizabeth Maeve Casey, daughter of Sean and Riley Casey, received the Sacrament of Baptism on August 8. She is shown here in the arms of her father, Sean, along with her mother, her godparents, and Father Anthony.



GRAND RAFFLE TICKETS

Please return sold tickets with stubs and donations in the offertory basket at the church entrance or to the parish office. If you would like additional tickets, please call or email the parish office.

Join EMMANUEL RADIO to Honor Blessed Mother
1230AM, 970AM & 101.1FM | online at www.1230radio.com
The Church dedicates the month of August to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
Emmanuel Radio can help you form a deeper relationship with our Mother and realize and respond to her love, and share it with others.
Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pray for Us!

COLLECTION REPORT

Week of August 9	
– Sunday Offering	\$3,403
– Fuel/Maintenance	205
– Other	5
– Church in Central/ Eastern Europe	136
Total	\$3,749

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT
and to all who have made a special effort to continue their contributions throughout these months of the pandemic crisis.

Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org



The Parish Drive-in Movie scheduled for August 22 has been postponed until September. More details to come.

COMMUNITY BAG PROGRAM

Reusable bags are back and the St. Boniface Social Action Committee has been selected as the benefiting non-profit in the Community Bag Program! For the month of August, we will receive a \$1.00 donation from each purchase of the \$2.50 reusable Community Bag at the Hannaford store located at 333 Mass Avenue, Lunenburg.

In That Woman Is Ourselves

Mark calls her “a Greek” but Matthew uses the ancient name “Canaanite,” a reference to the original inhabitants of the Holy Land, who were conquered by the Israelites some twelve centuries before the time of Jesus. Matthew recognizes that this encounter between the woman from the area of Tyre and Sidon and Jesus is about an outsider “wanting in.” So he heightens the drama by identifying her as a member of that group of pagans who were Israel’s first enemies (after the Egyptians, of course). Notwithstanding her status as “Canaanite,” her anxiety about her demonized daughter brings her to Jesus with a plea that he heal her.

We rightly marvel at the faith of the woman, and we wonder at the abrupt words of Jesus.

Matthew turns her into a model of Christian prayer when he amends Mark’s version to have her say, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David.” Again revising Mark, Matthew introduces a startling response by Jesus: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (for this indeed was his way of operating during his earthly ministry, the Great Commission to make disciples of all the nations coming only later [Matt 28:19]). When she insists, again modeling Jewish-Christian prayer, “Lord help me,” Jesus goes so far as to use a popular insult term for Gentiles: “It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” In turn, the woman has the blessed *hutzpah* to make a witty play on Jesus’ image: “Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.” Notice that she just addressed Jesus as “master” (Kyrie). “O woman,” he responds, “Great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed from that hour.

We rightly marvel at the faith of the woman, and we wonder at the abrupt words of Jesus. But when we ask the question of why Matthew, and Mark before him, saw fit to include this account in their Gospels, it becomes evident that they, especially Matthew, had other concerns than ours. For Matthew’s introduction of the reference about Jesus’ mission to the house of Israel echoes the theme of Israel-first-then-the-nations developed elsewhere in his Gospel (see Mt 10:5-6 and 28:19).

Today’s First Reading, from Isaiah 56, helps us appreciate that larger picture which Matthew made his own. Isaiah envisions foreigners coming to the Jerusalem Temple to “join themselves to the Lord” and to “make joyful” in God’s house. This joining of foreigners in the worship of Israel is not something that occurred upon Israel’s return from the Exile. Indeed there were laws against pagans even stepping into the inner court of the Temple. This oracle referred to something beyond what the returning Judahites were ready for. That is why the prophecy could so readily be understood as a reference to messianic end-times. Indeed, the vision climaxes with words that Jesus quotes on the occasion of his cleansing of the Temple toward the end of his mission: “For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” Jesus’ announcement of the kingdom of God signaled the end of business as usual, and an opening of the heritage of Israel to the rest of the world.

That’s where we come in—that vast majority of we Christians who are Gentiles. However we understand the mainstream Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah—and the reading from Romans 11 shows that this question preoccupied Paul greatly—the fact is that Christian faith has its roots in Judaism and understands Jesus as implementing the vocation of Israel to be a light to the world. It would be a salutary help toward humility if we let the account of the Canaanite woman remind us that if we have found healing in the house of Jesus, it is only because we are foreigners who have been allowed to come in from the outside.



Honor and Shame

Several aspects of Mediterranean culture place this reading in a fresh perspective.

Honor and Shame

When he sent the Twelve on mission, Jesus directed them to **“the lost sheep of the house of Israel”** and urged them to steer clear of the Gentiles and Samaritans (Mt 10:5-6). Now Jesus himself heads in pagan direction, toward Tyre and Sidon, and is met by a pagan (Canaanite) woman from that region (Mt 10:21).

Will he contradict himself? This would be a shameful reversal of his earlier honorable charge to the Twelve.

Challenge and Riposte

Always keep in mind the very public dimension of life in the Middle East. There is always a crowd at hand to watch, judge, and decide whether to grant honor or impute shame.

The woman proves she can give as good as she gets. She is equal to the game of challenge and riposte. The Canaanite woman uses the crowd to her advantage and hurls a challenge at Jesus.

Like others in the Gospel, she cleverly addresses Jesus with an honorific title: **“Lord, Son of David”** and uses this title as a basis for her request: **“have mercy on me.”**

In the Middle Eastern world, mercy is a sensitivity to **and sense of responsibility for one’s debts to God and** other human beings. People who ask for mercy feel they are owed something; people who show mercy acknowledge and pay what they owe.

The woman’s plea is based on recognizing Jesus’ Davidic ancestry and hoping he will act in accord with the reputation of the great King David. He will offer a remedy, perhaps a cure, for her demon-tormented daughter.

Jesus is not obliged to answer the challenge. The woman is a pagan, he is an Israelite. They are not equals, and the honor game can only be played by equals. Following the honor code of his culture, Jesus ignores her.

The woman is not put off. She continues to follow the crowd and shriek after Jesus and his disciples (Mt 15:23). Her behavior undoubtedly attracts an even larger crowd. The disciples urge Jesus to send her away. Their suggestion is unclear: send the woman away by healing her daughter or without doing so?

Jesus’ answer seems to imply that the disciples meant the former. He continues to refuse by citing his commitment **“only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”**

But the woman is not to be denied. She comes forward, kneels respectfully to honor Jesus, and again uses the **honorific title, “Lord.” This time her plea is simple and moving: “Help me.”**

Jesus responds harshly and argues against throwing the **children’s food to dogs. This is an enormous insult to the** woman. Gentiles were commonly referred to as dogs.

Jesus apparently repeats his culture’s stereotype. Calling a woman a dog is offensive in every language. Jesus has no qualms.

To everyone’s amazement, including Jesus, the woman retorts with cleverness: “Lord [note the honorific title], even dogs eat crumbs that fall from their master’s table” (Mt 15:27).

The woman proves she can give as good as she gets. She is equal to the game of challenge and riposte. She is the only person in the Gospels who proves to be a **good match for Jesus’ wit. The fact is not lost on Jesus.** He responds with the equivalent of **“touché!”** and grants her request. The daughter is healed instantly.

Saints of the Week



SAINT LOUIS of TOULOUSE

August 18. Born into royalty and headed for the throne of his father, Saint Louis of Toulouse renounced his status, became a Franciscan, and was named a bishop. It was during the years that he was held hostage and under the tutelage of the Friars, that Saint Louis began to realize his call to something other than the throne. He was known for his generosity to the poor.



SAINT JOHN EUDES

August 19. Saint John Eudes was a noted preacher and confessor. He founded several seminaries because he saw the need for clerical formation. He also founded a couple of religious communities to address the needs that he saw. Saint John had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



SAINT BERNARD of CLAIRVAUX

August 20. Wanting to be a simple monk in the quiet of a monastery, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux was called upon to be a very active member of the Church in his day. Preacher, reconciler, adviser, healer—just a few of the roles he was called to play. A man of many talents, he used his abilities for the service of the Church.



SAINT PIUS X

August 21. A man of humble background, and wanting to maintain a simple lifestyle, Saint Pius X endured the trappings of the papacy as best he could. Known for encouraging frequent reception of Holy Communion, and concerned about world affairs, he led the Church in holiness and grace. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest popes of the 20th century.



QUEENSHIP of MARY

August 22. The notion of a queen is somewhat foreign to American ears, but this feast of Mary recognizes her role in the Kingdom of her Son, Jesus. If Jesus is king, Mary is certainly queen. And the title — or its surrogate — goes back centuries in the Church, as Mary has been praised for her position in the Church and among the people of God.

Even during this coronavirus pandemic, God is still calling women to religious life. Have you ever pondered whether God is calling you to become a Sister? We, the Dominican Sisters of Peace, invite you to spend some virtual time with us praying and talking with **our Sisters, sharing with women of FAITH, discovering God's PURPOSE for your life, and** enjoying an experience of COMMUNITY online. Join other single, Catholic women, ages 18-45, to learn about contemporary religious life at this free Virtual Discernment retreat, September 11-13, 2020, via Zoom videoconferencing.

During this retreat, you will have time for quiet personal prayer and reflection, and there will be presentations on the discernment process and about the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Also, you will be matched up with a sister companion to speak with one-to-one for spiritual guidance and help in discerning your vocation in life.

If interested in this retreat, please contact Sr. Bea Tiboldi, OP at btiboldi@oppeace.org or call or text her at 614-400-1255 and she will get back to you with more details about this opportunity! We look forward to hearing from you! Or, you can go ahead and register at www.oppeace.org

The Dominican Sisters of Peace

We are Dominican Sisters whose charism of preaching flows from our contemplation, study, and community life. We are more than 435 Sisters and over 650 Associates who live and minister around the country and across the world. We are committed to greater involvement in the global community, simplicity of life, and itinerancy. Our diverse ministries include education, health care, social work, spiritual direction, parish-based ministries among others. We serve in universities and colleges, high schools, elementary schools, literacy centers, ecology and spiritual outreach centers, parishes, prisons and more. We work to create environments of peace by promoting non-violence, unity in diversity, reconciliation, and justice through solidarity, especially for women and children.

Saint Boniface Church

817 Massachusetts Avenue, Lunenburg, MA 01462

Parish Office: 978-582-4008 email: stbonifaceparish@verizon.net

Discover St. Boniface ~ Visit our website: www.StBoniface-lunenburg.org

Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

	<i>phone</i>	<i>email</i>
Rev. Anthony Mpagi, Pastor	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Jo-Anne Poirier, Administrative Assistant	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Lucy Marcil, Religious Education Coordinator	978-502-7993	lmarcil419@gmail.com
Claire Garrity Neas, Music Ministry	617-823-4237	cmkakosgarrity@aol.com
Louise Nadeau, Sacristan		
Ministry Schedule	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK	978-582-7110	

Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

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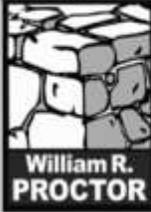
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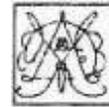
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