

Twentieth Sunday Year A. 20th August 2023. Be persistent in seeking your good heart desires.

Today we are presented with a challenge of faith by a Canaanite woman. After Jesus left the Jewish territory, he withdrew to the land of the Gentiles, the unclean people as far as the Jews were concerned, no wonder they referred to them as “dogs.” Jesus came originally for Israel, not for Gentiles. He was trying to remain hidden, but somehow this Canaanite woman heard about him, she went and met him with her need, knowing fully that he would not attain to her because of her social status as a Canaanite and he a Jew.

We did not know what prompted her and where she summons this courage to meet Jesus. “Have pity on me Lord son of David! A demon torments my daughter.” He ignores the pleading of this woman contrary to what prophet Isaiah told us that he had been anointed to bring good news to the poor; he has been sent to bind up the brokenhearted (61:1) however, he was not considering her requests. But even as he was silence, which is often seen as the (best answer to a fool), the woman never relented in asking, so much that she made the disciples uncomfortable, and they had to talk to their master to send her way. But quickly let them know that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. By this statement, it appears he was not ready to help. The woman came and fell on her knees begging, “Lord help me.” Jesus releases a painful bombshell by saying “it is not right to take the food of the children and give to the dogs.”

Anyone would have preferred His earliest silence than the bombshell he threw nevertheless, the woman still insisted on her good heart desire, saying Lord yes you are right, indeed we the Gentiles, are dogs before you the Jews, but “Please Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.” Finally, Jesus answered her request and applauded her courage, remarkable resilience, and faith, when he said “Oh woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”

Keep in mind the Lord's response to this woman as He did, was not to destroy her faith, but to develop it. Her own replies showed that she was growing in faith and unwilling to let Him go without getting an answer.

We cannot but admire her patience and persistence. Though, not a Jew but she knew he was the Messiah which is why she first addressed Him with his title: Have pity on me son of David, "Son of David" was a name for the Messiah. Cf. Matt 22:42. This woman came as a sinner needing help, and she offers no argument, in his reply he didn't call her dog like the Pharisees would have addressed a Gentile. He was not playing games with her, nor was He trying to make the situation more difficult, Jesus was drawing out of her a growing response of faith.

Sometimes in our difficult moment when we come to God, and the situation persists, let us not see it as God is ignoring us but he is rather helping us to draw out that little faith in us into a stronger one.

From the look of things, the woman loves her daughter so much, that was why she cannot afford missing any opportunity. Sometimes we have ample opportunities, but we misused them by not allowing God to draw out the faith in us; we lack patience, unlike the Canaanite woman, we feel offended when the situation is beyond us. More reason we should persist in standing with Jesus when we know that we cannot do it ourselves. Let us come to the house of the Lord, the house of prayer for all people to pray for our sons and daughters who are sick in spirit, our relations, and those who pleaded for our prayers. Do not relent in asking the Lord on their behalf.

Peace,

Fr. Jingbe Simon

