

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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From Shouting to Kneeling, From Pleading to Winning

There is something extraordinarily beautiful about the Gospel today. It is not simply the story of a woman asking Jesus for a miracle; it is the story of a woman whose faith goes through a remarkable journey:

From shouting to kneeling.

From pleading to silence.

From silence to questioning.

From questioning to humility.

Finally, from humility to victory.

The Canaanite woman comes to Jesus with a desperate heart. Her daughter is suffering, and a mother's heart cannot remain silent. She cries out: “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!” She does not come with a theological argument. She does not come with status or privilege. She comes with one thing: a desperate faith.

But something very painful happens; Jesus is silent. The Gospel recounts that “He did not say a word in answer to her.” Imagine that moment: she has come to Jesus; she has called Him “Lord”; she has placed her hope in Him; and yet, there is no answer. Perhaps this is where many of us find ourselves sometimes. We pray, but heaven seems silent. We ask, but nothing seems to happen. We knock, but the door does not seem to open. Sometimes the most difficult test of faith is not suffering itself; it is the silence of God in the midst of our suffering.

Despite the seemingly cold response from Jesus, notice something beautiful happens: the woman does not walk away. The disciples then asked Jesus to “Send her away.” Now, she



faces another obstacle: she not only carries the suffering of her daughter; she also faces rejection from the people around Jesus. Instead of moving away, she moves closer. Matthew tells us that the woman came and did him homage, saying: ‘Lord, help me.’

Notice the sequence of postures the woman goes through: first, she was shouting; now she is kneeling, and her prayer becomes shorter and deeper. At first it was: “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!” Now, she pleads: “Lord, help me.”

Sometimes real prayer becomes simpler as our faith grows deeper. We no longer need many words. We simply kneel before God and say: “Lord, help me.”

Then comes perhaps the most difficult moment in the entire story. Jesus says: “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” However, the woman’s response is noteworthy: she does not become angry; she does not walk away; she does not retort to say: “How can you speak to me like this?” Instead, she takes the very words Jesus gives her and turns them into an expression of faith: “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

What an extraordinary demonstration of faith! In effect, she is saying: “Lord, I am not demanding anything. I am not claiming anything. I am simply trusting in your mercy. Even one little crumb from you is enough.”

Here the woman teaches us something profound: Faith does not always demand an explanation from God. Faith continues to trust God even when it does not understand God.

St. John Chrysostom was deeply impressed by this woman’s perseverance and humility. She did not allow the apparent rejection to discourage her. Instead, her perseverance became the occasion for Jesus to reveal the greatness of her faith. Similarly, St. Augustine sees in her a beautiful movement from humility to exaltation.

What a transformation! She enters the Gospel as an outsider: a Canaanite woman with no social privilege, no religious status, and apparently no claim upon Jesus; pleading on behalf

of her daughter, and leaves with the certainty that her daughter had been healed. She leaves the encounter with something far greater than status: the praise of Jesus Himself, revealing to everyone the greatness of her faith.

Now, the Gospel is directed to our own lives. How many times have we stopped praying because God seemed silent? How many times have we become discouraged because someone remarked: “Send him or her away”? How many times have we allowed one closed door to convince us that God has closed every door?

The attitude of the Canaanite woman encourages us to not give up when our faith is being tested. When God seems silent, keep praying; when others tell you to go away, keep trusting; when the answer is delayed, keep kneeling; and when you cannot understand God's ways, keep saying: “Yes, Lord.”

And when all you have left is a tiny little crumb of hope, remember: A crumb from the table of Jesus is enough to change a life.

Let us ask and pray to the Lord for the same fervent hope and faith that the Canaanite woman had.