



His Eminence was pleased to join with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta in commemoration of the 2019 International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Following this year's theme of "Justice, Only Justice, You Shall Pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20), His Eminence chose to speak on the faith of the Canaanite Woman in the Gospel of Matthew, which is the Gospel reading for this Sunday. To view the video [please click here](#). The text of his remarks is below.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

To participate in this year's International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, I began by asking myself: what unites us? As the Spiritual Shepherd of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta, what do our parishioners have in common with their Catholic and Protestant brothers and sisters? The answer, of course, is Faith. Faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We read in the Gospel of Matthew of a Gentile woman from the land of Canaan. Her distress at the demon which possesses her daughter is so great, that she begs to receive Jesus' assistance. Remember, that at this time in Jesus' ministry, the people still held to their old ideas of the Messiah: that He would descend from the house of David, to restore Israel. No one expected a Savior to concern Himself with the Gentiles and Pagans. And so, it is for this reason that the Disciples treat her harshly. They have no pity when they say, "Send her away, for she is crying after us."

Jesus, who is All-Loving sees their mistake, but first, He must prove to them why they are wrong. He does this, by testing the woman. He explains that He was sent only to the House of Israel—yet she begs more. And so, he says to her, as a Jew to a Pagan, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Yet, so greatly does she believe—she does not turn away or become angry. She humbles herself and says, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Jesus answers her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And the Evangelist tells us that daughter was healed instantly.

In this moment, Jesus proves to all His Disciples that ethnicity, age, ability, whether we are men or women—these are small things compared to True Faith in our Lord. This woman recognizes that, despite her dwelling in a foreign land, she is not a dog, but a child created in the Image and Likeness of God. She shows us a future where people need only to accept the reality of our Resurrected Lord and Savior in order to become citizens of God's Kingdom. She also demonstrates that despite terrible trials and pain, the only necessary thing for us to hold fast to our Lord as a source of comfort and strength.

As we continue to pray for the unity of all our Christian Churches let us rejoice in the Great Faith we share: that our Lord and Savior, through His Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection has made us all Brothers and Sisters in His Body.

Amen.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta