

18th Wednesday of Ordinary Time. 8/4/2021

Praying in faith

Yesterday we heard the voice of Jesus in the Gospel, saying “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”. Today in the Gospel we hear him say “O woman, great is your faith”. Yesterday he was speaking to a Jew and a very close follower. Today he is speaking to a Canaanite woman.

There is a broader context to each of the stories, but the dialogue with Jesus can tell us something about the ways to relate to God, about prayer. How can we learn from the Canaanite woman, who got praised for her faith?

In our Gospel reading, this woman speaks three times.

First, “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon.” Then, “Lord, help me”. And

finally, “Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.”

Through her words, this foreigner first acknowledges who it is that she is talking to, using the specific messianic title, Son of David. She also recognizes her own reality, and does not claim any right or privilege, either inherited or earned. She brings her sorrow to the Lord in complete vulnerability, interceding for her daughter. And she appeals to God’s mercy. And she perseveres in her prayer. This humble attitude touches the heart of Jesus who aids her and praises her.

It was not the time yet for the gentile mission, and Jesus is focused on fulfilling first the messianic promises to the people of Israel. Only later, after his resurrection, will he

direct his apostles to “Go and make disciples of all nations”. But Jesus cannot resist the humble faith of this Canaanite woman.

Today we remember St John Vianney, who also persevered in faith. He grew up during the French revolution, and the Church was illegal during his childhood and youth. His family would gather for Mass in secret, risking their lives for their devotion. He struggled in the seminary but persisted with great faith and was finally ordained a priest and sent to a rural parish. Through his strong faith and self-giving he renewed his community, transforming the lives of many. He is the patron saint of parish priests.

So, we pray today for the intercession of St John Vianney for Fr Ben, Fr Gary and all our priests. That they receive God's consolation as they continue to guide us in faith.

We also pray, along with the Canaanite woman, with humility and perseverance, for our children and grandchildren. We bring to Jesus all the challenges and struggles in their lives and ask for his mercy. That the light of Christ may shine always in their hearts.