

2020 August 16

**Twentieth Sunday of the Ordinary Time**

**Readings:**

*First: Isaiah 56.1 6-7, "Soon my salvation will come and my deliverance will be revealed" (1b)*

*Psalms 67, "May God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face shine upon us" (1)*

*Second: Romans 11.13-15, 29-32, "The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (20)*

*The Gospel: Mathew 15.21-28, "Have mercy on me. Lord, Son of David." (22b)*

***One crumb of mercy satisfies!***

The language of Jesus to the Canaanite woman is not to our liking. *We do not approve of it?* Jesus *may be* our God and Saviour; yet we are quite uncomfortable with his language today. Could it be that the woman considered herself as coming from a lower caste in the ratings of the Jews, from whom comes Jesus, that she accepted and not resented the insult? Not necessarily! We may find it hard to get to the mind of Jesus.

The woman, in her search for a cure for her daughter's condition has exhausted all the available and known sources of healing. Jesus is the last recourse. She believed that he alone in the whole world could heal her daughter. Pride about her self-worth and self-respect are not at all a hindrance to save her child. She cast these out from herself and held on only to her faith. She is willing to humble herself to whatever extent that is required. That is precisely what she does today by stooping down at the foot of Jesus.

Jesus has been for a while with the *'lost sheep of the Israelites.'* His origins are from them and he offered the first chance to them to accept the Messiah and his kingdom. Their leaders' pride and self-centered and self-glorifying nature prevented them from accepting the Messiah. Jesus did this process of reaching out to the children of Israel first by himself and later by sending his disciples exclusively to the children of Israel. Now is time for him to search for his *'other sheep that are outside the fold'*. The mindset of the Canaanite woman and that of the Pharisaic leaders contrast each other. The woman had the openness and humility to welcome the Redeemer into her life.

Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman was the beginning of his journey to their territory, which was purposeful. Here we need to remind ourselves of Jesus' call to forsake everything, *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."* (Mark 8.34). It means casting out the ego and felling of pride in and about the self. That is precisely the woman did and she got what she wanted, and much more, the Kingdom. We do pray for our children. However, are we willing to stoop down before the Lord as our only recourse, truly casting away our ego? The Canaanite woman is a model of faith, trust, true humility, and total surrender to the Lord. Do we really believe that the Lord alone can heal us? If not, our prayers are not real; they happen to be demands for our *'entitlements'* from God. Do we have any? Is God really obligated to us?

*Fr. George*

