



Thoughts on the Journey...

Suanne Gettings—Pastoral Assistant

A candle was lit. The room was safe. The food was plentiful. We shared our faith in prayer around our table. The laughter and love was flowing as we celebrat-

ed my son's 29th birthday. As a mother, it gives me great joy to see the friendship my children share with one another and the bonds they have with their father and me. With each child's birthday, I can't help but reflect on the day they were born and the many changes we have been through as they have made their way to adulthood. These moments we share together become increasingly important with each passing year because they are less frequent than they used to be.

When the party was over and the day was done, I was lying in bed giving thanks for my family. Before long, my thoughts drifted from the comfort of my own life, to the many news reports from around the globe: the genocide taking place in South Africa; the murder, rape, and violence in Central America that is driving children to our borders; the oppressive regimes that cause death, division, and fear; the Islamist extremist attacks, the killing of children on the streets of our own cities; Before I knew it, the quiet of my room was invaded with the noise and chaos of the world. I tried to put myself in the place of these families marked by such horror and imagine what it must be like to be a mother in the midst of the evil. What would I be willing to do to protect my children from harm? How far would I go to relieve them from torment and terror? Suddenly, these children were no longer faceless. In those moments of reflection I couldn't help but see my own children in their place. I tried to search the hearts of these mothers who love their children as much as I love mine. I could only imagine, but I couldn't possibly grasp the enormity of their fear and trepidation.

Just for a moment, I will ask you to put all your preconceived notions and politics aside. Close your eyes and step out of the comfort of your life as you know it. Imagine a child or loved-one of your own in any of these horrific situations. What would you risk to save them? What would you be willing to give to bring them to safety? What would you ask of God if you cried out to him for help?

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the district of Tyre and Sidon to find some peace and quiet from the pressing crowds.. There, he was approached by a Canaanite woman, from that region, desperately begging the Lord's help for her

daughter who was possessed by demons. Initially, Jesus does not answer her. His disciples, in agitation, encourage Jesus to send her away. Their response seemed to be cold and heartless. Being a Canaanite, she was a descendent from a cursed people. In the Old Testament, when Joshua led the people of Israel into Canaan, they had been commanded to totally destroy the Canaanites. (Deut 7:2) In addition, this territory at the time of our Lord, was also known for vile religious practices, so she had a few strikes against her as she pleaded for her daughter. Jesus then tells her that he was sent only for the lost sheep of Israel. This mother was not taking no for an answer and she persists in pleading for the healing of her daughter. Then Jesus said in reply:

“It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” “Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.” Then Jesus said to her in reply, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And the woman's daughter was healed from that hour.

Hearing of the miracles that Jesus was performing for others, a spark of faith was ignited in this mom. She needed something more than her dead religion or her depraved society could provide. Driven by love, she was anxious and desperate to deliver her daughter from the grip of evil. Jesus was her last hope and she was willing to beg and plead for his mercy and compassion. It was because of her love, her faith, and her persistent prayer that Jesus delivered her and her daughter from the iniquity that possessed them.

The darkness of this world can provoke our hearts to scramble in fear and fear can bind our souls rendering us useless in the face of evil. We may wonder how God can allow such wickedness to bleed through humanity. Like the Canaanite woman, perhaps the evil and sinfulness we are witnessing around us today will be the path to our holiness. At times of comfort, there is no growth and at times of growth, there is little comfort. As Christians, here's what we know - GOD IS OUR ONLY HOPE. We must have confidence in his love and mercy. We need to cry out to God in prayer without ceasing. We must not fight evil with evil, but rather put on the mind of Christ when we respond to the violence, oppression, and perversity that plagues our world. But first, we must look inside to see if our resolve has been dimmed by discouragement and commit to reignite our own faith so we can be the light that helps dispel the darkness.