

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



August 17, 2014

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 118

Gospel [mt 15:21-28](#)

At that time, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon." But Jesus did not say a word in answer to her. Jesus' disciples came and asked him, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us." He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the woman came and did Jesus homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." She said, "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.

Spiritual Reflection

We tend to reduce people to statistics and categories; we assign blame and fault to them because of a certain demographic they fall into. The Canaanite woman in today's Gospel is a victim of such stereotyping is instantly dismissed because of their status. We are too quick to assess people purely by our own measure of what is right and good; we determine their worth by their function or their usefulness in helping us accomplish our own goals and agendas; we quickly size up people by our own inaccurate and sometimes bigoted stereotypes, forgetting that we are dealing with flesh-and-blood human beings with hopes and beliefs much like ours. In honoring the goodness and love of the Canaanite mother for her sick child - who, as a Canaanite, represented one of Israel's most despised enemies - Christ illuminates our vision enabling us to see one another as God sees us. The call to discipleship demands that we look beyond labels and stereotypes to realize that every one of us is a child of God, brothers and sisters all.

Spiritual Question

1. Have you ever felt like God is treating you poorly?
2. Who are some of the people you have problems viewing like God views?
3. How persistent can you be in prayer?
4. Note how Jesus lets the disciples behave badly before He speaks so that He can teach them. Are there any time the Lord would be ashamed of the way you treated others?
5. How can we focus on being more human to other humans?