

## Fr Ryan Homily 8/16/20

Read: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7; Romans 11:13-15, 29-32; Matthew 15:21-28

Once there was a lady living in New York City who enjoyed to go for a walk on her lunch break in Central Park and it just allowed her to clear her mind, get some fresh air, feel the sun on her face. Over the course of about 2 weeks she started to notice that the same man was trailing at a distance behind her. And this kind of scared her but not being one to have others fight her battles for her one day she decided that she was gonna confront this man directly. So, one day she's walking, notices him and she turns around on a dime to confront him and she says why are you following me, what are you doing? And this man, rather embarrassed, he said I didn't mean to scare you but ever since I saw you walking here about two weeks ago on the path, I thought you're the most beautiful woman I've even seen and I was trying to get the courage up to talk to you. I fell in love with you at first sight and I wanna get to know you and I wanna spend time with you. My heart skips a beat every time I see you, there will never be another like you and I think we were destined to be together. The lady just stays quiet for a moment and ponders over what this man has just said to her, she's rather put off by it, she'd kind of wants him to leave and so finally she looks at him and smiles and says thank you it's very flattering what you said but if you think I'm beautiful you should take a look at my younger sister and she is standing right there behind you. And with hopeful eyes immediately the man whips his head around and looks and there's nobody there. And confused he turns to look back at the lady again and with a very knowing grin on her face she says and if you really meant what you said to me you wouldn't have turned back to look. And she walked away, and she never saw him again. So that man in the park, as sincere as he may have been, he needed someone with some wisdom to show him that his words about love were not actually coming from his heart. And we all need that person sometimes, who can reveal us to ourselves, to show us what we can't see or maybe what we don't want to acknowledge. And Jesus, of course, can do that better than anybody. Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. And that I think is what is going on in today's Gospel. Actually, I think it's been going on for two Sundays now in the Gospel. Remember last Sunday, Peter was told by Jesus that he was a man of little faith. But that was after Jesus had given Peter this miraculous power to walk on water. And of course, Peter doesn't stay up because he looks away from Jesus and his

faith and his doubt creep up on him and Jesus has to save him. Now, Jesus will praise the Canaanite woman's faith and grant her request but that was after He ignores her, tries to send her away, He calls her a dog- my goodness- after He stonewalls her and ignores her. So Peter, He gives him a miracle, this woman He ignores. But then He makes a comment to each of them about their faith. Huh! I think there is a connection between these two Gospel's then, don't you? It would seem that even though His approach between them is different, He invites Peter, He ignores the woman, the objective is the same. He is putting their faith in Him to the test. And you know what these two Gospels prove? That just because God gives a miracle, doesn't mean that person has great faith. And just because God is silent doesn't mean a person's faith is weak. Just something to think about. We as people were not really good at assessing ourselves; we're just not. We need somebody else to do it. We can assess ourselves differently than we actually are. They did this test, some years ago, it was called the Third International Math and Science Study, or TIMSS for short, and they gave these math and science tests to college students around the world. College seniors in the United States got next to last. We as a country did almost absolutely worst of any country when it came to these tests on math and science. At the very end of the test however, there was one last question. They asked how well do you think you rated compared to the other countries? And guess what we rated ourselves? Number 1. And I just think that's kind of amusing, right, we do terribly but we think we're really great. We don't assess ourselves well and that inability to assess ourselves happens in our faith as Christians as well. We may think our faith is farther along than it actually is, maybe I don't really need to change. Or maybe we undervalue ourselves and think oh what does it really matter if I pray or not, I don't have great faith anyways. But who do we need to set us straight, who do we need to assess us accurately? It's Jesus. Look at this interaction again between Jesus and this woman because she just won't quit. She won't leave Him alone even after she's being stonewalled. And I can just picture Jesus, I think He's laughing, as He finally says, "oh woman, great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish." Put yourself in the place of this woman; let Jesus assess you. How would you have reacted? Like this woman did or in a different way? When He puts off answering you, when He is silent, it has to be for your own best interest, doesn't it? This Canaanite woman is frozen out by Jesus, but it shows that her faith isn't based on a whim, she just pursues Him all the more. No one likes to be stonewalled by God,

no one likes to be frozen out, but it happens to everybody. Everybody! Did you know only after Mother Teresa of Calcutta died that it was revealed from her diary that during her life as a nun, God seemed to blank her out. For long periods of time she got nothing out of her prayer with Him. Mother Teresa even questioned if she should leave the convent, wondered if her prayers were even being heard, why they weren't being heeded. And so, what happened to the woman in the Gospel, it happened to Mother Teresa too! It happens to everybody. And some people took that revelation about Mother Teresa to mean that her faith actually wasn't that great, that it was happening to her because her faith was that weak. But it was just the opposite. That despite years and years of darkness, spiritual darkness, she just hung on doggedly to her faith and she never eased up on her charity to the poor. Everyone feels shut out by God at one point or another. It doesn't mean He doesn't care. And it doesn't mean He's not there. It means He's testing your faith; He's asking you to persevere. Persevere, Persevere. Not for a few days or a month. I've known people who have been persevering in prayer for something for 35 years and it could go longer. Jesus Himself on the cross was shut out by His Father. My God, My God, why are you forsaking Me? Jesus was stonewalled on the cross but as that anguished cry left His heart, it led Him to deeper trust where He can say into Your hands I commend My spirit. My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me? But into Your hands I commend My spirit. Faith is not about how God responds to you, it's not about His gifts or His silence. Faith is about sticking to the will of God and trusting Him in season and out of season. Yes, we may have pressing needs that we're asking God about. Remember the woman's request in the Gospel was that a devil would leave her daughter. That's no small matter. And yet Jesus puts even that request on hold so that the woman's faith can mature, so that it can be tested. So, the lady in the park who I mentioned at the beginning of the homily? There was wisdom in how she responded to that man. She revealed something to him about himself that maybe he couldn't see. Jesus is wisdom. He's the source of wisdom. He knows exactly where your faith is and mine. And being with Him at mass, prayer, meditating on the Gospels, going to confession, all these ways of being with Jesus we are going to be revealed to ourselves. And like for Peter last week, ye man of little faith or like the woman in this Gospel oh woman how great is your faith what's deep in your hearts and mine is going to be known to us. The good and the bad, how strong our faith really is will be revealed to us when we stay in

the presence of Jesus. So friends, just because you get what you want from God doesn't mean that there are not deeper issues. And just because he may respond to you with silence doesn't mean you're not loved. Because there's wisdom in how Jesus responds no matter how He does.

Amen