

HOMILY ~ 20th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

AUGUST 19/20, 2023

The trip down any cereal aisle with young children will teach you the meaning of the word persistence. Parents may say no to the first few requests for a box of Captain Crunch or Lucky Charms; but by the sixth or seventh request, the child is betting that the parents are going to CAVE! If only we could have the persistence of a child!

In our Gospel today, Jesus at first seems reluctant to help the woman. She is a Canaanite, not a Jew. Did you notice Jesus' initial response to her – or should I say, his lack of response? As the Gospel states, “**But he did not answer her a word.**” Isn't that surprising and not what one would expect? “**He did not answer her a word.**” What is going on here? Is Jesus being rude, or cold hearted? How do we explain his silence?

Jesus is waiting ... He wants this woman to exercise her faith ... But in spite of this seeming rebuff, the Canaanite woman persists. She perseveres. She kneels before Jesus and says, “**Lord Help Me.**” Yet again, another obstacle is placed in her way. Jesus replies, “**It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.**” The woman came, not claiming anything as her right, but simply throwing herself on the Lord's mercy. She was willing to be a dog that eats the scraps off the table. The Canaanite woman was not deterred.

Think of the obstacles that her God-given faith fought through: She was not deterred by Jesus' initial silence when he did not answer her a word. She was not deterred by the comment of the disciples, “**Send her away.**” She was not deterred by Jesus' comment about being sent only to the lost sheep of Israel, nor by his remark about the dogs eating the bread of the children. This woman simply would not give up. She perseveres. Her faith, her God-given faith, overcomes all of these obstacles.

God wants to give you that same kind of faith – persevering faith in a merciful Lord. God wants you to come to Jesus, time and time again, despite the obstacles in your lives. It is so easy to give up. People do it all the time. When there is suffering in their lives, they give up and think that God is uncaring. When something goes wrong in their lives, people just give up and stop coming to Jesus. When something at Church does not go the way they like, people give up and stop coming to Mass or quit ministries. God does not want you to give up. He wants you to persevere, in faith, like the Canaanite woman did, and to seek - and to find - his mercy and blessing. The Canaanite woman did not give up. Jesus commends her faith, **“O woman, great is your faith!”** Jesus grants her request, and heals her daughter.

Persistence in prayer is a common theme of the Gospels, a measure of faith in times of trial. Jesus encourages us to be persistent in asking his heavenly Father with our requests while trusting that God’s will, not ours, be done.

As we go forward this week, let us find that cereal aisle persistence from our youth and put in our prayers to the Lord!

Peace,

Deacon Don