

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time August 16, 2025

I had the privilege of attending the Steubenville conference in Spokane. The priest was preaching on blind Bartimaeus. You know, *"Jesus, the son of David, have mercy on me."* And the more the crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus, the louder he becomes *"Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me"* until Christ comes up and asks Bartimaeus what he wants, which was to receive his sight, and of course, his faith healed him. And the priest talked about the crying out to Our Lord to be healed. And something unexpected happened as the priest was repeating *"Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me"* and pausing for reflection. "Jesus, heal me from my porn addiction", you hear one voice cry out. And another cry out, "Jesus, heal me from my drug addiction." With another "Jesus, heal my family, my mom and dad are thinking about getting divorced." And this went on for minutes as people were just shouting out, crying out to the Lord for healing, personal healing, for their family. Very deep stuff.

Brothers and sisters, these were teenagers. With their friends sitting right next to them courageously begging God for help, to heal them from their vices. I don't know about you, but as a teenager the last thing I was going to do was to admit to a group of fellow peers what was going on in my life. Heck, I don't think I would stand here as an adult and shout out what I need help from the Lord either. Let's put this in perspective. It was pretty amazing. Afterwards I heard some of the event speakers, the ones that came in, were talking. They had never experienced something like this. It stuck with me. Even now I'm telling you about, I can feel the goose bumps or whatever you call that, the emotion, the spirit. It was beautiful.

Well, brothers and sisters it can be hard to humble ourselves and admit that we need help, and that we cannot completely take care of ourselves, to be childlike, as our heavenly Father. Now, some of us have health concerns for ourselves, family members, or friends. Others have been struggling with a venial sin that will not go away. Drugs, alcohol, pornography, smoking, pick one. Still others are worried about children, grandchildren, siblings, and friends who are falling away from the faith, and are no longer practicing. In some form, many of us are like that mother of the daughter in today's Gospel. We care for somebody who's suffering. We cannot help; we cannot reach. Now, one's pride can often keep one from asking for what is needed. Some do not like asking anyone for any kind of help. "I don't need any charity. I'm here to fix people. I'm going to solve the problem." The vice of pride is the queen of the seven deadly sins. It's queen of all sins. And I've said it once, I'll say it again, probably until I die. "I did it my way" is a theme song to hell. I'm not condemning Frank Sinatra, he just picked a good song, but it tells us to go the wrong way to go.

Pride tells us we can do it our way. We don't need anybody. We are sufficient on our own. However, pride can cause us to stop talking to God, especially when we don't get what we want when we want it, how we want it as fast as we want it. What we will conclude, since God didn't say anything, he must want me to do X, Y, and Z. Instead of waiting on the Lord, we wait on ourselves. Another dangerous principle. We will put that off to the side.

In contrast, today we have the Canaanite woman, a mother of a suffering child who did not seem to mind asking God for help. Not once, but multiple times, and she presented herself before our Lord

and others as a favor. She humbled herself and persisted. The Gospel text reports that Jesus did not answer her at all. He was silent to her. The Canaanite mother showed us what to do. She didn't walk away saying God gave up on me and he wants to do it his way, he doesn't care. No, in faith, she persisted. She kept coming to Christ and asking him to heal her loved one. Our beloved disciples, what do they do? "Lord send her away." Not heal her and make her stop. "Tell her to go away because you don't want to deal with her." And our Lord points out that his mission is only to the lost sheep of Israel. The mother continues, "*Sir, please.*" Jesus remarks to her that "*the food of children ought not to be thrown to dogs.*" Not taking insult from Christ, the mother humbly acknowledges her position, and her lack of providential privilege to the God of Israel, and she asks for unmerited mercy anyways. "*Even dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of the master.*" This woman show both tremendous faith and tremendous ability, and persistence. And we hear our Jesus acknowledge her faith. "*O Woman! Great is your faith. Let be done for you as you wish.*"

Woman, less we hear that as a derogatory 'Woman', the scriptures have a different point. The Woman will stomp the head of Satan. Woman was not derogatory. "Great was your faith", and her daughter is healed immediately. This passage came after Christ rebuked Peter for his lack of faith. He's showing the faith of a Gentile person, a woman whom we would call heathen. Look at her faith. The centurion faith, too, is pulled out for how great it is.

At first glance, our Lord's word can seem horrible. He could have immediately offered to heal this poor woman's daughter without making her go through this. And yet Jesus put the woman to the test.

And we recall that Christ was able to see the hearts and minds of people and with whom he interacted, he knew what people were thinking. He was there to teach, too. See by comparing the concerned mother to a dog, our Lord is bringing to light what was in the hearts and mind that his followers. The phrase was used by Jewish people to describe Gentiles, and it had a different connotation for us in the West. To be a dog means you're less than human. It means, you only work on your base instincts, or base intuition alone. It means you don't even have a grace of rational intellect. It's a huge insult that is still there today.

Our Lord is bringing this to light. What was in their hearts and mind, even saying, *"I have only come to the lost sheep of Israel."* The people would know that they would only come to the lost sheep Israel. He is showing that he is going farther. He's starting with Israel and going further. It's pretty impressive. Moreover, our Lord's actions were tailored to the faith of this woman, those around her, and the witness her life will bring to all. He sees that she has faith. He puts her faith to the test for her and for her to bear witness to further faith. Faith is stronger when it's tested.

Additionally, St. Augustine observed that when our Lord healed the daughter of this Canaanite woman, he did not go to her house. She came to him. This signifies that the Gentiles are to be saved by his Word. His Word working through his Church. And I imagine in this Gospel passage had a particular importance for Saint Augustine, whose mother was the woman pleading to Christ for her family, afflicted by sinful lives that they were living. Saint Monica, through her prayer, kept boldly coming to Jesus, placing her fears, her worries, and her tears at the foot of the Cross, begging our Lord for

the conversion of her husband and son. And guess what? Her husband converted on his deathbed. He was an abusive man. Through her intercession he found the graces to come back to God and repent and be healed. And the son ultimately became bishop. One of whom was St. Augustine, the doctor of the faith, so be careful what your mother's prayed for your children. Pray hard that God's graces work and dwell in all of us.

Brothers and sisters, the Canaanite woman teaches us that faith does not give up, even if God seems silent. Faith keeps knocking. Faith keeps asking. Faith keeps seeking. Faith keeps trusting. The Canaanite woman never saw her daughter's healing until she first persevered in faith. Saint Monica never saw the conversion of her family until she first persevered in faith. God's timing is not our timing. Importantly, his silence is not his absence.

Brothers and sisters, perhaps, there's someone in our life that we almost all have stopped praying for. He's given up for. Do not give up. Keep praying, keep bringing them to Jesus, keep entrusting them to his mercy. Keep believing that God loves him even more than you and I do. Don't give up.

Therefore, we ask God for the graces to imitate the Canaanite mother, St. Monica, and those brave teenagers, that we may keep boldly coming to Christ, persevering in prayer, and placing all our trust in Jesus who loves us beyond all measure. And that we may never cease praying for those whom we love knowing that the Lord, who heard the cries of the Canaanite woman, who answered the tears of Saint Monica, and who listened to those teenagers, still hears every prayer offered in faith.