



Reflection from Ben Babaran

The Gospel reading from Matthew this Sunday gives us the story of Jesus healing the demonic-possessed daughter of the Canaanite woman. To better understand the story, let us remember that Matthew was an outsider. He was a tax collector. He was forbidden to go into the temple. He was excommunicated.

So, the first thing to observe is that the woman in the Gospel was also an outcast. She was someone not welcomed among the Jewish people. But boy, she had a lot of spunk – she is the only one because of her faith who ever managed to change Jesus' mind.

The Canaanite woman began with, "Have mercy on me, Lord." The same words we say at the beginning of every Mass, "Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison."

However, Jesus did not answer her.

What do we do when Jesus does not answer our prayers?

The woman in the Gospel showed persistence in prayer. She kept asking, seeking, knocking. Faith and humility come from persevering in prayer.

But Jesus responds to her with the most shocking and harshest of all when he says, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." It is given that the Israelites used to call the Canaanites dogs. Yet, it is hard to hear this from Jesus. I firmly believe Jesus was teaching the disciples, Matthew who experienced rejection, and us that we don't throw people away or shove them away because they are not of our kind, or they do not share our faith. At St. James, we are very conscious of this teaching. We are a welcoming parish! For midtown KC parishes of the diocese to survive, it is imperative that this teaching of Jesus be practiced.

Instead of being silent and taking her daughter home, the outcast woman showed her faith in Jesus saying, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." Her FAITH and her LOVE for her daughter made Jesus change his mind and granted her wish – her daughter was healed!

The two things that Jesus found in the woman were FAITH and LOVE. It is not whether you are Jew or Gentile. It is not whether you come from one group or another group. It doesn't matter what your history is. It doesn't matter where you were born. What matters is faith and love!

God does not look upon the Jews, or even the Catholics or the Christians. God looks upon everybody in the world as welcome at His table.

*Peace,
Ben*