



Sunday of the Canaanite Woman

Matthew 15:21-28

*“O woman, great is your faith!”*

***My mouth shall speak wisdom***

***and the meditation of my heart shall bring forth understanding.***

***Prokeimenon. Psalm 48.3,1***

The word that is spoken reveals the silence of the heart. The heart is the place where faith dwells. The heart is a battlefield, because from within the heart can also proceed “*evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*” (Mat 15: 24 - Jesus talking to the apostles just before meeting the Canaanite Woman). There is great faith within the heart of the Canaanite woman because within her heart the battle was ferocious and evil did not prevail.

The faith of the woman is revealed within the encounter and dialogue between Jesus and her. It is not easy for us to understand this dialogue because today we speak from our mind and from our imagination and less from the reality of what we live. We live little and speak greatly, remembering not much. The dialogue in the gospel today was spoken in Truth, from the heart of what was said, experienced and lived before.

***“This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.”*** (Jesus quoting Isaiah when rebuking the Pharisees Mat 15: 8-9)

Jesus meets the Canaanite woman after He challenged the interpretation of the law done by the Pharisees concerning cleanliness and uncleanness. He rebuked those who respect the formality of the law with a heart untouched. He rebuked them just to come across a woman not born under the law but with a broken heart. The reverse of the situation brought silence within Him. Maybe what could help us understand this silence better is to think about a situation that can happen today, for instance having a “Gentile” come to the liturgy and ask for communion. Even though you might sense the goodness of the heart, they could not receive communion (even if it breaks your heart) if they are not in communion. Jesus explains later the real purpose of the law. To bring about communion with God and with each other for all those who desire to enter within this communion. To come and take and go away satisfied brings about no communion with each other but rather wastes the offering. Even though the “law” is clear, one could not bluntly rebuke the one who asks with a broken heart. Silence would be the first natural reaction.

***"But He did not answer her a word."***

The silence of God was heavy rejection on her soul. We can all relate with this silence in moments of despair. As somebody said to Joanna this week, *I believe in God because He is the only one I can be angry with. If there was no God, whom could I be angry with?* How deep our hell becomes if even God is silent to our anger, our pain, our suffering, our abandonment. The silence of God silences the hope of man, and for how long can this really be "sustainable" given the fragility of man's life? (How long? Father spoke about it for the last few weeks when commenting on the psalms).

***"...and a sword will pierce through your own soul also, that thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Luke 2:22-40***

The silence of God when He encounters the piercing of a parent's soul is heartbreaking. St Simeon speaks about this suffering to the Mother of God, giving it a purpose and a meaning. The silence of God leaves the Canaanite woman with no meaning and no consolation. This silence would have touched the remorse in the mother's soul for the evil that her daughter was oppressed with.

***"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon."***

God is not only silent to a person who is in deep suffering but He doesn't answer to the suffering of a parent who feels responsible because she "failed" to protect the child who is severely possessed. The silence might have made the mother think that it was her fault. And maybe it was. But God chooses to "ignore" the reality of her heart. We know from the experience of parents today how real this experience is. When we see so many children wounded today in Toronto, we also see the broken hearts of the parents. The silence of God brings no consolation to anyone. At the mission, we've seen and heard about this reality in Toronto way too many times, not farther than this week, where the loss cannot be compensated by anything.

Last week, we heard in the chapel, on Friday morning, the words of St Isaac the Syrian who, among other things, said that hell is the experience of hurting those you love. God being our friend we love, we hurt Him when we sin. Because of our own sins we break this communion with him and there is no healing that we can bring about. Hell is this experience of hurting what you love the most.

***"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."***

The rebuke of God Who speaks to you is a blessing because it breaks the silence. He talks to you and this is enough even though He rebukes you. The rejection gives you the assurance that you are heard and you are not alone in hell, and this is the first step out of it already. Knowing that we exist in our hell is an assurance that we are still alive and that there is a way out of it.

## **But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."**

There is no one more humble than Christ. Because He is the one who descends in hell out of love. And yet, the Canaanite woman humbles herself in His presence. It is the humility of a soul who loves and whose love is harmed and ignored by all and yet, this love cannot stop pleading to God from hell.

## **She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."**

On Friday, the whole discussion on the gospel was more about those who eat the leftovers. "They are very good", Eliana says. "You know, I see so many people looking for food today in the garbage. Or if not for food, for something they need. In my neighbourhood. So to have leftovers is good."

The Canaanite woman was not the only soul who was satisfied with crumbs in the gospel. She reminds us of Lazarus, who was fed with what was falling down from the rich man's table. Her faith is real not because she figured out an answer for Jesus but rather because she answered from a reality of her heart, from an existence where the crumbs were not foreigner to her. She has been satisfied with crumbs and she was genuinely grateful for that. The Canaanite woman's faith is great because it is a faith that was fed with crumbs in hell and she is grateful for that. Her gratefulness broke the silence of God bringing about healing for a daughter within a land that chose to be a foreigner to the law of God, to a land and a generation that opens up to evil.

## **And her daughter was healed instantly**

We might not hear this very often today when encountering the painful reality of a suffering parent or a wounded child in a land that opens more to evil spirits today. It feels that there is no consolation. We cannot listen even to the silence of God because of the noise and long speeches of those who harm more, speaking with no hope and no sense of the mental health of children and how this can be addressed. However, the gospel and Jesus speak directly to them and to their faith because there is much left within their hearts. If there is faith in hell, at the proper time this will be revealed, Jesus says. This faith might not be the remedy today for what is already lost, but rather the voice that is pleading to God and to His silence. A heavy cross to bear but a cross that brings about humility and encounters the living Christ in our mortified hell, in which we are tempted at times to find delight.

*“...my daughter is severely possessed by a demon.” But he did not answer her a word.!”*



# *“O woman, great is your faith”*

For those who are sick

Delia; Valerie; Tom; Peter; Marco; Kim (knee surgery); Tihomir; Pani Eleanor; Kate; Payton Clark (back surgery); Sana, and her family in Egypt. Isaiah; Pani Alexandra; Mary Mcgee's daughter, Sydney; Peter Christine; Stephanie; Iulia; Jason; Sophia; Alexander; Charles; Tom; Paul; Phillip Hadler and his wife Juliet; Cristeena; Ann brown's daughter; Silvia, Jincy; Shiron Crisreen; Allain;Levalin and the family;Seena Colin and her husband; Waheeda and children; Faizah (depression); Shirin and her family; Eva; Frank, Cristina; Daniela, Jerry; Delia ; Ragaie; Victoria; Mike.Farida need prayers for her hand to heal; Roselyne and family ; Ana, Cornelia; Leon to Jerry; Nikitha, Ocean;Gloria, Anne, Marina, Marie, Edemene; Joanna and family GN; Rejoice;Romana, Coline, Michael, Peter, Henry, George, Kelly;Tom; Marina;Sandra and her son Chris;Kumari;Susan;child James; Aaron; Sylvia;Fr Jonathan;Tharshini and her two children; Ann Tyron and her family; Sandra Gomaz's children; Sameen; Sophia;Amy;Swetha and children ;Charitha; Jitesh's parents ;Demene;Carol; Gloria; Hawa Bibi; Vimaladevi; Lynn; Michelle;Emanuel(Mani);Stefanie;Geoff;Joey;Evangelia;Sophia;Melanie; Césare;Tanya;Piper;Darius; Zamalk; Nelly; Nahla; Mira; Sandral ;Brenda;Anna Avairo's daughter Vol Gomaz; Levlin's two children Sri' ; Helen; Paul; Wafaa

Please pray for health and salvation:

Community In Goma and the children in their care: Neema; Rosine; Justine; Miriam; Chance; Jemyma; Patricia; Alliance; Nice; Dorcas; Justine; Agnes; Muhindo Dorcas. Rejoice; Claudio of Sant'Egidio for health and salvation; George, Connie, Nick, Fennie, Theodore, Chris, Nick , Toulou, Steven, Nicole, Tony, Sam, Sophia.; Prayer for Mary Mcgee.She lost her grandmother.; Fr. Michael and Pani Karen; Anthony and the family.He lost his brother in Trinidad.He is hoping to make a visit to Trinidad; Ramanand and his families in Guyana, USA and here in Canada (Ramanand lost three of his family members including one of his brothers, suddenly within two months); Paola; Elizabeth; Matthi; Dave and his family; Jai's

family; Anne Tyran; Joseph to find housing; Lito; Mauro, Prayers for Ted's family (incarcerated son to be free)

Dameal asking prayers for his future wife Fathima to be free from addictions

Liz Gibicar asking prayers for her mother; Mom waiting for baby Tejasree; Prashastha; Maria and Dingo; Crisent; Helen; Greta; Elizabeth; Dean; John; Liz; Crisent; Ann Brown; Elizabeth; Sifie; Allen; Leon; Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting; Aaron, Anastas, Olivia, Gelly, Frank, Eva, George, Rebecca, Andreas, Cathyann, Reigan, Stephanie, Peter, Christine; Christian family from Bangladesh, Sandra, Peter, Angel, Bless, Grace, Swetha family; Atlaw single mom at shelter, Vernevil family; the family of Kenide; Saathiya; Sena; Vinothiny Yvienne; Abdul; Sakanthalathevy; Jumke; Naimi; Anish; Joshua Daniel; Maria Lolita Soliman Torres, Jonathan, Richard, Richard, Mary, Elizabeth, Michael, Bill, Robert, Alan, Joanne

Please pray for the deceased:

Rejoice's mother; Edmund; Pani Eleanor; Fr John; Alexandru; Constantin; Robert; fr Aurel; Georgi; Rada; Petre; Stela; William; Samuel; Debie; John; Amy, Willie; Dave's wife; Ana; Shirin's cousin in Jordan; Father Lawrence; Dave; Anne Tyran's father; Edith, Sr. Mary Magdalene, Joice, BettyAnn, James, Pauanasuy Kamthasang, Maria (Covid), Andrei, Agostina, Carminda, Vimaladevi's sister; Sri's mother, Carol's Mother and 23 year old nephew passed away in Haiti. Demene's mother; Dalalzaki.