

Wednesday's Gospel: "Be it done as you desire"

Gospel for Wednesday in the 18th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 15:21-28*)

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon.”

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged

him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” And he answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.”

And her daughter was healed instantly.

Commentary

True teachers are moved by the desire to reach people’s hearts. They are not satisfied with repeating things and demanding that they be memorized. They know they need to

encourage the person being helped to make his or her own discoveries. And they strive to set down solid foundations and open the person's heart to an inspiring vision of life. This is what Jesus does with his words and deeds.

Our Lord has come to seek everyone, but his mission has a clear priority: the lost sheep of the house of Israel. These sheep have a very special place in his heart; they are the Chosen People, to whom the promises have been made, and so many gifts have been given. But the people of Israel have not always been faithful to their vocation, although the Church would be born from a small remnant. The faith of the Chosen People needs to be stirred up, and Jesus tries to do so by using as a model those who, although not belonging to the house of Israel, have faith in Him: a strong faith, shown in deeds.

Jesus' words leave no doubt about the dignity of the people of Israel. At the same time, he makes clear that faith is needed to make progress along the path of salvation. External privileges are not enough. Only where there is faith is there life. And that Canaanite woman, who sincerely loved her daughter and trusted Jesus so greatly, was far ahead of many Israelites on the path to holiness: "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." Saint Paul urged: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work according to his good pleasure" (*Phil 2:12-13*). God spurs us to make progress, but faith and charity are built on our response to the divine call on a daily basis, shown in our specific deeds.

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