

Thursday's Gospel: A Faith That Crosses Over Borders

Gospel for Thursday in the 5th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 7:24-30*)

And from there Jesus arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house, and would not have any one know it; yet he could not be hid. But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she

begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

And he said to her, “Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

But she answered him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

And he said to her, “For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.” And she went home, and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone.

Commentary

How did that Syrophenician woman know who Jesus was? The Gospel passage tells us nothing about it. Because of her background, she

probably didn't live far from Galilee. There our Lord had worked many miracles, and the people were enthusiastic about his preaching. Furthermore, the hope of the Messiah's arrival had spread among the Jews, and the nearby towns across the border would have known something about the hopes of the People of Israel.

In any case, that woman's heart was open to God's action. The news she had heard about Jesus' willingness to care for people in need – for the sick, for those possessed by a demon, etc. – would have enkindled her hope. In her dialogue with Christ, she seems to admit that the People of Israel have a special relationship with the Lord, since they are like children seated at the father's table. Thus we can intuit that the Syrophoenician woman has some form of faith in the promises God had made to the Jews. But she also senses that this special

relationship between the Lord and his People is not confined within itself, but rather that God's mercy somehow overflows to reach all mankind.

This woman is a model of humility and trust. She has no qualms about lying on her face at the feet of that prophet from a foreign country. And she is ready to insist even when it seems she lacks good arguments to attain her request. May our faith too be able to overcome borders. And may it become a constant prayer filled with abandonment in God's hands, who never looks upon anyone with indifference.

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