

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A

THEME: FAITH AND PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

The Canaanite woman in our Gospel reading today was a gentile; a “pagan” from the Jewish point of view. She was not a believer in the one God of Israel. She was rather a believer in many gods, and possibly an idol worshiper too. But she had two important attributes that even the Jews needed to develop, and every Christian needs to develop even today. Those attributes are faith and perseverance. Incidentally, they are also two attributes that we need to bring to our prayers for them to be well made, for them to be efficacious.

The Canaanite woman had enough faith to believe that Jesus had power to heal her daughter. Therefore, she went to ask him to do just that. It so happened that, Jesus always demanded faith before performing a miracle. Maybe that was his way of getting the beneficiaries of his miracles involved in their own healing.

The Canaanite woman was persistent. Even when it appeared that Jesus was not going to help her, she persevered in pleading with him. She did not even take offense at Jesus' remark that “It is not fair to take the children' food and throw it to the dogs.” Her response amazed even Jesus to the extent that he praised her faith: “Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.”

Jesus, of course, knew what he was going to do all along. But he just wanted to test the woman's faith, how deep it was. The woman passed the test with distinction, and got what she asked for. In doing so, she taught both the Jews in her time and we in our own time an enduring lesson on prayer.

If we want our prayer to be answered by God, we must make them with faith. We must believe unflinchingly that God can do what we are asking and that he will do it for us; That is, God is not just able to do what we are asking, but also willing. He loves us enough and cares enough to want to do for us whatever is best for us.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we must persevere in prayer. We should not give up simply because the answer to our prayer is taking time to come. Remember that God's time is always the best. If we give up, we are the losers, because then, we are never going to get what we are asking for. But if we persevere, there is not just a chance, but a certainty that we shall receive the answer to our prayer in a way that God alone knows is best for us. It may not be in the way that we want it, but it will be in the way that God wants it, and it will always be the best for us.

When next our prayers take time to be answered, keep in mind the story of the Canaanite woman and also that God's time is always the best.