

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

**Twentieth Sunday
in Ordinary Time**

Gospel Word
Matthew 15:21-28

Two important points are made in the Gospel reading this Sunday. First, genuine faith in God involves both our heart and our head—the total persons' response to God. Second, we do well to be persistent in our requests to God. It's not that God doesn't hear our prayers, but maybe we are not quite ready to receive God's love in full measure.

We can more deeply understand Jesus when we examine how he relates to others, especially those who are considered outsiders. Today's Gospel reading showcases an outsider. In the religious culture of those days, being a Canaanite and being a woman were two strikes against her. Canaanites trace their origins back to the original inhabitants of Israel. They worshiped false gods, and were looked at as outsiders by the Israelites. Women were not to associate with or make demands on men in public. It just wasn't done. But this Canaanite woman is persistent, even in the face of Jesus' rejection. The scene is all the more dramatic because eventually Jesus grants her request. He is impressed by her strong faith in him. He always is!

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

So we are called to think about the authentic faith that finds its roots in our hearts. Also, we can reflect on whether our faith can stay the course, even after some discouragement. Can we be like that woman who was so persistent in her request of Jesus?

We are told throughout the Gospels that religion can easily become simplified into a matter of external actions. Do this, and do that, and all will be well with God. But God is first of all the One who loves us. God wants our love, our heart, and our mind—in return. Genuine love involves both our heart and our head—the totality of our being. God sees into our depths. That's also where we can find God, whose Spirit dwells within us. One might think of this Sunday's readings as a test or check-up on how we are with our faith: Strong or weak? Authentic or showy?

Prayer

God of Unending Love,
You keep us close to your heart always.
Help us to do the same with you.
Amen.