

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

The Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Two important points are made in the Gospel reading for this Sunday. First, genuine faith in God involves both the head and the heart, the total person's 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.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Matthew 15:21-28

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 worshipped 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!

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? This is an important aspect of faith that can be discussed and lived in families.

Parent Survival

Being a parent is a lifelong job. In fact, it's probably the most intense lifelong activity that many of us do. We are always the parents of our children, who may be along in years themselves. Whether we remain good parents, just as the Gospel suggests, is a matter of our heart. St. Paul says that love is patient and kind. He might also add that it can and should be a lifelong aspect of our lives. And because this is so, we do well not to think of our parenting as a sprint race, but more like a marathon.

So take it easy. Consider your pace, and always think of your ministry as a parent not just for today. Invest in your parenting by taking good care of yourself. Get enough sleep. Take a relaxing bath or shower. Train for the long haul. And all during this lengthy life of parenting, hold your children close to your heart.

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

Car or Meal Talk

Let's talk about religion. What's really important? Is it more what we do, or what's in our hearts? Another question: When we say that religion is a matter of the heart, what does that mean to each of us?

One-Line Prayer

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