

‘The Faith of the Canaanite Woman’ (*Matthew 15:21-28*)

Sunday 5 April 2026 Year A

Collect

Lord Jesus Christ,
You know our demons better than we know them ourselves,
Grace us with the faith of the Canaanite woman,
So with Your support we may be healed.
Amen

Scripture

***From the Gospel according to Matthew
15:21-28***

*At that time, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.
And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out,
"Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!
My daughter is tormented by a demon."
But Jesus did not say a word in answer to her.
Jesus' disciples came and asked him,
"Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us."
He said in reply,
"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
But the woman came and did Jesus homage, saying, "Lord, help me."
He said in reply,
"It is not right to take the food of the children
and throw it to the dogs."
She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps
that fall from the table of their masters."
Then Jesus said to her in reply,
"O woman, great is your faith!
Let it be done for you as you wish."
And the woman's daughter was healed from that hour.*

Word of the Day, Sunday 16 August 2026, Vatican News Website

Reflection

What are the demons we battle each and every day?

Do we reach out in faith to Jesus humbly asking for His healing mercy?

As we reflect on this Sunday's Gospel, these are central questions. We all have demons we battle every day. Perhaps not spectacular, but insidious, destructive habits driven by self-interest in its various forms – pride, gluttony, lust for power and pleasure...to name but a few.

The fundamental question is...**do we have the humility and faith to realise that it is only through God's saving power that we are healed?**

Even after decades as an Oblate, with the wonderful support and direction of our community, old habits die hard. And in the long spiritual journey, there are periods of dryness and darkness where our faith is tested....and seemingly lost for a period of time.

At those times, we can fall into despair. We can't fix the problem or control the situation. The great illusion is that we can do anything on our own. The reality is we are born in relationship, nurtured in relationship and sustained in our relationship with God's creation in every minute through the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the abundance of food & resources provided by our beautiful land and waters.

In Stan Grant's recent book '**Murriyang**' there is a wonderful insight into the ancient wisdom of our first peoples on this reality. Paraphrasing Stan, he writes *..my father taught me that our identity as Aboriginal people is not 'who' we are, but 'where' we are*. In essence, we don't exist without the land and waters that sustain us. What a wonderful antidote to the 'selfie' culture of our social media society!

This is the underlying message of today's Gospel. We are made in God's image and sustained by His Creation, so we are constantly in need of God's healing love and mercy.

This is the genius of the Jesus Prayer so beloved by our Eastern brothers and sisters '*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner.*' At first this prayer seems a bit negative, but on reflection, with humility, we realise this represents the deep reality expressed so honestly by Saint Paul, when he states, *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do (Romans 7:15-20).*

So let us take time in silence today to re-discover God dwelling in our hearts. Ever Present, All Loving, Endlessly Merciful.

Closing Prayer

We Pray.

Lord Jesus Christ,

That we have the faith to ask constantly for your help,

Give thanks for Your abundant love,

And go forth in the name of Jesus to share that love and heal our broken world.

Amen

For Further Reflection

The apparent aloofness of Jesus who said: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v. 24), did not discourage the Canaanite woman who persisted: "Lord, help me" (v. 25). And she did not even desist when she received an answer that would seem to have extinguished any hope: "it is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (v. 26). She had no wish to take anything from anyone; in her simplicity and humility a little was enough for her, crumbs sufficed, no more than a look, a kind word from the Son of God. And Jesus was struck with admiration for an answer of such great faith and said to her: "Be it done for you as you desire" (v. 28).

Dear friends, we too are called to grow in faith, to open ourselves in order to welcome God's gift freely, to have trust and also to cry to Jesus "give us faith, help us to find the way!". This is the way that Jesus made his disciples take, as well as the Canaanite woman and men and women of every epoch and nation and each one of us.

Faith opens us to knowing and welcoming the real identity of Jesus, his newness and oneness, his word, as a source of life, in order to live a personal relationship with him. Knowledge of the faith grows, it grows with the desire to find the way and in the end it is a gift of God who does not reveal himself to us as an abstract thing without a face or a name, because faith responds to a Person who wants to enter into a relationship of deep love with us and to involve our whole life.

(Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 14 August 2011)

This Lectio was prepared by Paul 'Godric' Griffiths, Oblate OSB, Jamberoo Abbey (1994)