



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 29 JANUARY 2017

SUNDAY OF THE CANAANITE WOMAN

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians [6:16-18; 7:1]

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “*I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*” Therefore “*Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.*” Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

EXPLANATION:

The Spirit of God dwells in those who are baptised and chrismated and follow a lifestyle that demonstrates faith that Christ is Lord and Saviour. They become **God’s temple** – in which holiness pervades to the degree they allow. No one can be dedicated to both God and idols (false gods). God demands our total allegiance for our own good – our salvation. At that

time when Paul wrote this Epistle Corinth was a pagan city. The lives of the Corinthians revolved around idol worship. Those who became Christians were expected to make an absolute break with that type of life because worship belongs only to the Creator. The setting is different in our day, but Paul's advice still applies. We are given life to have the opportunity to find God and grow in union with Him. Thus we were created with a space in our hearts that aches until it is filled by His presence. If something other than God becomes the most important element in our lives, be it career, money, power, fame, a person, or even sports or other forms of recreation, it takes God's rightful place. It becomes to us a false god – an idol – and we become idol worshippers. Idol worshippers have nothing in common with those who worship God, nor do they ever find true peace, because they misuse the gift of life. It is crucial that we place God on His throne in our hearts and lives so all other elements will take their proper place. **(6:16)** Paul quotes the Old Testament (Isaiah 52:11), God's word to the Hebrews to be His people, which was different from the Gentiles who were considered unclean according to the Law of Moses. He tells the early Christians that they too must be set apart from prevalent pagan influences and activity. They are to become imitators of God, just as young children imitate their parents and thereby learn and grow. We must separate ourselves from the ungodly in our society, as far as our thoughts and conduct. Yet at the same time we are called upon to love even our enemies, to be good examples to all, and to welcome any sincere seeker to the love of the Gospel. This delicate balance is difficult, but "with God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26). Above all, we must not allow anything in our lives to come between us and God, or anything that has the possibility of drawing us away from God. If we put Him first in all we do, He will claim us as His children, and we will become heirs to His Kingdom forever. **(6:17-18)** Therefore we

must **cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit** and continue our efforts to be Christ like in all

GOSPEL **The Reading is from St Matthew [15:21-28]**

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”* But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him saying, *“Send her away, for she cries out after us.”* But He answered and said, *“I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, *“Lord, help me!”* But He answered and said, *“It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”* And she said, *“Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.”* Then Jesus answered and said to her. *“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.”* And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

EXPLANATION:

Jesus went to Tyre and Sidon which were Gentile cities. There He met a non-Jewish woman who cried out to Him for mercy, to drive out the demon that possessed her daughter. But Jesus did not answer her a word, not out of contempt, but to show that He had come, in the first place, for the Jews, and to shut the mouths of those Jews who might later slanderously accuse Him of doing good to Gentiles. He also did not answer her so that he might reveal the persevering faith of the woman. Jesus refers to the Jews as “lost sheep” because of the wickedness of those shepherds (Pharisees) to whom they had been entrusted. **(15:21-24)** So her persistence brought a response. But it was not the response she wanted. To her continued pleading Jesus answered with a proverb, **“It is not right to take**

the children's bread and cast it to dogs". Jesus' answer should not be understood as an insult but as a way to reveal the treasure of the woman's faith. Jesus speaks to her as a **"dog"**, because the Gentiles led an unclean life and were involved with the blood of meat sacrificed to idols, while the Jews He speaks of as **"children"**. But she answers wisely with faith and humility, "Even though I am a dog and not worthy to receive a loaf of bread, that is, a mighty act and a great sign, nevertheless grant this to me which is a small thing by comparison with Thy Power, though to me it is great. For crumbs are not large in the eyes of those who eat loaves, but to dogs they are large, and they feed on them." **(15:25-27)** Christ did not immediately give His assent at the beginning and even drove her away. But now when her faith and humility has been revealed she hears the words of praise, **"Great is thy faith"**. By saying, **"Let it be as you desire"**, Jesus showed that if she had not had faith she would not have obtained her request. **(15:28)** So, too, if we desire to obtain something we must approach Jesus with faith, humility and persistence in prayer. The tragic thing is that when life gets us down and God apparently does not hear our prayers, we give in too soon to discouragement and despair. It's as if we stopped nine-tenths of the way along the road; exactly as if this woman had given up after Jesus' first silence or after His rebuff. It's tragic because God never lets a person down who trusts in Him all the way. He will see us through to the end and beyond! When God seems to be deaf to our prayers, you can be assured that He is not. He is listening. And although He may not grant us the specific request we are making, He will still answer. He will respond to every prayer that is offered in persistent, humble faith. Not always in the way we expect or in the way that we may want, but always in the way that is best; in the way that is in accordance with God's providence is good for us.