



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

### PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, "EVANGELISMOS"

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**SUNDAY FEBRUARY 10, 2019**

### SUNDAY OF THE CANAANITE WOMAN

**EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul's Second Letter to Timothy [2:1-10]**

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

## **EXPLANATION:**

To be of the faith and to keep the faith means that we have to keep the Commandments of God. We apply ourselves to the faith according to the rules as athletes do when they compete with one another for the ultimate victory and prize. Victory can only be realized by adherence to the rules and not on one's own terms. This means we have to hear God's Word and to apply it with truth and understanding according to His instruction so that we live and strive according to what God has ordained for the salvation of His people. All of this requires great effort, sacrifice, self-denial and discipline if we are to reach the goal of our salvation. In this regard what St Paul is instructing to Timothy is that there is great toil and suffering involved and that we should not be dissuaded from our task by immersing ourselves in the ways of the world which is a distraction that will ultimately rob us of the prize. We enter therefore and compete in the arena like the athletes do. To be successful competitors we must remain focused, otherwise distraction will be our undoing. But because Jesus died on the Cross, He grants new life to us through His Resurrection; nothing is more valuable than this. St Paul then moved by the Spirit explains to Timothy that his efforts are not in vain though misunderstood by the world, even to the point of having him imprisoned and shackled with chains, he nevertheless remains free in the spirit. Knowing all this St Paul dismisses the weight of his burden by saying: "Therefore I endure all things" for the sake of the truth. This then is what liberates him and that through his efforts others may also attain their salvation. To understand these things we must not trust in our own judgement and decisions but call on the Lord to give us "understanding in all things."

**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.