

AUGUST 14, 2011

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

MATTHEW 15:21-28

Several themes unfold in the story of the Canaanite woman's exchange with Jesus and the disciples. One includes God's call to us to reach out to others in need even when we are not inclined to do so. Another is God's call to have his children persist humbly in their pleas for help. Also included is God's generous response to a single act of faith.

At the onset of the reading the woman approaches Jesus and his disciples as they enter a new region in their travel. The disciples respond with disdain and resistance to the woman. Maybe they were tired from their travel. Maybe the woman was repulsive to them because she was a Gentile. Maybe she was obnoxious in her approach to them.

Whatever the case might have been Jesus' response was different. Jesus challenged the woman to persist in her plea and challenged her faith. But ultimately Jesus had mercy on her and responded to her daughter's need. And in the process Jesus showed the disciples that we must reach out to the lost and needy regardless of our personal biases and feelings.

John Martin Moyer reinforced this teaching by his call to the Sisters to practice charity in the form of mercy ("The Charism of the Sisters", p. 135). Moyer stated in regard to charity that part of our duty is "to suffer and pardon insults and to bear with the faults of our neighbors" (Directory, Project, p. 97). He also encouraged the Sisters in working to "apply themselves more particularly to those who are not naturally attractive" and "without allowing themselves to give in to their natural aversion that some may arouse" (Directory, Project, p. 143).

I pray that I will humbly persist in my petitions and rely on God's providence. And I pray that God will grant me the grace necessary to reach out to these all those in need-especially when I don't feel like it.

Reference: Kernel, S.M. (1982). A Project of Life According to Providence: The Charism of the Sisters.

--Lee Ann Waltz, Associate

For reflection or sharing:

- ▲ What groups or individuals does our society disdain? What is our reaction, concern for them?
- ▲ What would "persistence" look like in our quest of justice for those in need?
- ▲ Reflect on our Provident God who reaches out to all.