

## February 2, 2014: The 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Of the Canaanite woman)

### Epistle reading: II Cor. 6:16-16, 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."*

### Gospel reading: Matthew 15:21-28:



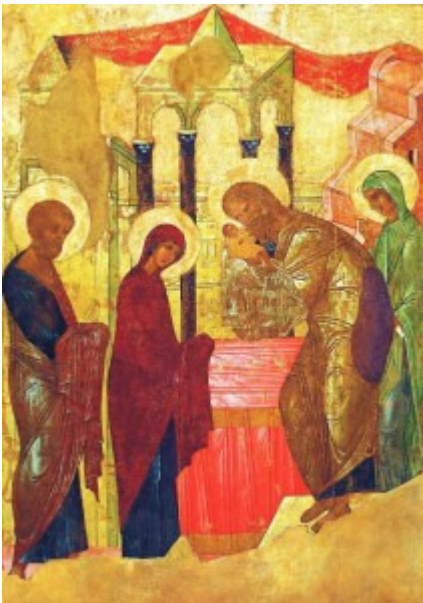
*"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and 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 worshiped 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 masters' 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."*

The Gospel reading of this Sunday is a good argument for intercessory prayer, the prayer offered on behalf of others. The woman of Canaan (another "foreigner") is pleading with Christ for His divine mercy on behalf of her daughter who was *"severely*

*demon-possessed.*" The other aspect of this story is the persistence of this woman. At first, her cry for help is ignored, then she is refused again and in the end she is likened to the animals: *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."*

My question is: at what point would we have given up and disrobed ourselves of whatever faith we had, concluding that God (if He existed) was unmerciful and unloving? As I often say, all prayers are heard but not all are answered. Sometimes we are praying for the wrong thing or for the wrong reason. Other times we pray very superficially and only when we need something specific, expecting instant results. What about the people who pray regularly and earnestly and their prayers still go unanswered? The story of the Canaanite woman is teaching us that sometimes God just wants to put our faith to the test.

Let us engage in fervent prayer, asking for God's mercy and help, saying: *"Have mercy on me, O Lord!"* and *"Lord, help me!"*



On February the 2nd, we celebrate **the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord**, when Mary and Joseph, forty days after the birth of Jesus, brought Him from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to present Him to God in the Temple in fulfillment of the law of Moses. On this day, Mary handed the Infinite One to an old man named Simeon. Simeon had been waiting for the Messiah, assured by God that he would not see death before seeing the Lord's Anointed One. On this day, while holding the Anointed One in his arms, he prayed: *"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel"* (Luke 2:29-32).

This custom was imported by the early Church, and it is still practiced in the Orthodox Church, whereby, the mother is required to come to church with the baby, on the 40<sup>th</sup> day of giving birth, for a special service. If the baby had already been baptized, the priest does the churching of the baby, concluding with the prayer of St. Simeon. If the baby was not baptized, the churching takes place right after the christening of the baby.

**Fr. George Bazgan**

## **Sunday Fellowship**

The following families are scheduled to look after  
this Sunday's fellowship:

**Costel & Vasilica Ionescu  
Viorel & Veronica Ciocan  
Petrică & Gina Lăcătușu**

**Thank you all very much!**

**Note:** We kindly ask all participants in this program to bring cooked food only, which can be warmed up using the stove in the small fellowship hall.

**Thank you!**

## **Valentine's Supper & Dance**

**On Saturday, February 15, 2014, there will be a  
Valentine's Supper and Dance at the Romanian Center.**

**Supper will be served at 7:00 P.M.**

**Tickets: \$30/adults and \$10/children (7-14).**

**Come and spend a memorable evening with us!**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**The Annual General Meeting is scheduled for  
March 2, 2014, after the Divine Liturgy.**

**On the Agenda:**

**Financial and other committee's reports.**

**Members in good standing will be able to vote.**

**All are invited to attend.**

**See you on March 2, 2014!**