

February 2, 2020: The 17th 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." At some point, even the disciples intervene and offer their own intercessory prayer on behalf of the Canaanite woman: *"Send her away, for she cries out after us."* It is this particular instance which strengthens our belief in the prayers and intercession of the saints on our behalf.

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 dogs: *"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 for a long time? 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!"*

Fr. George Bazgan

Sunday Fellowship

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

**Apostol Alex & Georgeta
Bacivan Milan & Cornelia
Stoica Emilian & Simona**

Thank you all very much!

Altar boys for this Sunday:

**Corbu Arkin Gabriel
Manic Dumitru
Ștefănescu Alexander**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**The Annual General Meeting is scheduled for
March 1st, 2020, after the Divine Liturgy.**

On the Agenda:

- Financial and other committee reports.

**Members in good standing will be able to vote.
All are invited to attend.**

PLEASE, PLAN TO ATTEND!

ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

THE CHURCH IS BORN FROM THE SIDE OF CHRIST

Do you wish to learn from another source as well the strength of His blood? Look from where it first flowed and where it had its source! It flowed down from the cross, from the Master's side. St. John says that, when Christ was dead but still on the cross, the soldier came and pierced His side with a lance, and straightaway there came out water and blood. The one was a symbol of baptism, the other of the mysteries. Therefore, he did not say: "There came out blood and water, but first water came forth and the blood, since first comes baptism and then the mysteries. It was the soldier, then, who opened Christ's side and dug through the rampart of the holy temple, but I am the one who has found the treasure and gotten the wealth...

Blood and water flowed from His side... Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, - the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit, - and from the Holy Eucharist. Since the symbols of Baptism and the Eucharist flowed from His side, it was from His side that Christ fashioned the Church, as He fashioned Eve from the side of Adam... Do not understand, then, how Christ has united His bride to Himself and what food He gives us all to eat? By one and the same food we are both brought into being and nourished.

A Christian's conduct in Church

Before I begin to address the topic of „church conduct,” it is important to address the question „Why do we come to church?”

We come to church on Sundays (the Day of the Lord) in order to reaffirm our vocation as liturgical beings, to continue our spiritual growth and to strengthen our communion with Christ and His Church which began when we were accepted into the community of the faithful through the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Eucharist (Communion).

For an Orthodox Christian, attending the Divine Liturgy is not only a privilege but an obligation as well. It is a privilege in as much as we, as members of the visible Church are called to bring the Eucharistic elements (bread and wine), be part of their transformation into the Body and Blood of Christ and then, partake of them in the form of the Holy Eucharist, all this in the context of the Divine Liturgy, the highest form of prayer we can offer to God. It is also our obligation to attend the Divine Liturgy, obeying thus one of the commandments of the Church.

In order to benefit the most from our presence in Church we must keep in mind a few rules:

- 1. Come to Church on time (before 10:00) in order to participate in the entire Divine Liturgy.**
- 2. If the service is already in progress, you must stop and see what is going on. If you came in during the Scripture readings (Epistle or the Gospel), you should wait at the back of the church until the reading is over and then, quietly, take your seat.**
- 3. Pick up the liturgical book and follow closely the service, reading all of the prayers.**
- 4. During the Divine Liturgy you are not allowed to move around or talk to other people. You can do that at the end, during the fellowship.**
- 5. Out of respect for the most important part of the Divine Liturgy, please refrain from walking in front of the Altar after the procession with the Holy Gifts.**