

February 14, 2021: 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 one more out of the many arguments (examples) 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 yet, their prayers 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 Service Attendance

Due to the continuing State of Emergency, and the recent measures imposed by the provincial authorities, the maximum number of people attending Church services is 20.

In order to give more people a chance to attend, we ask those who attended last Sunday, to skip this upcoming Sunday, establishing some sort of a rotation system. Also, only one person from the same family, please!

We apologize for this inconvenience and hope that the restrictions will continue to be relaxed in the near future.

Those who attend, are kindly asked to observe the recommendations of the experts, such as: wearing a mask, washing hands, social distancing, etc.

Thank you all and may God keep us safe!

We are live streaming the Liturgy

As we continue to operate under these restrictions, we are live streaming the Divine Liturgy on You Tube. To access the Sunday Services, [click here](#).

Prayer at the time of pandemic

O Lord, our God, who are rich in mercy and, with Your wise care, guard our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, stop this pandemic, as You have ceased the punishment of the people in the days of King David. You who are the Physician of our souls and our bodies, give healing to those contaminated with this disease, hastily raising them from their bed of suffering, to glorify You, the Most Merciful Savior, and protect those who are healthy from any disease.

Bless, strengthen and shield, O Lord, with Your grace, all those who, with love of people and sacrifice, care for the sick at their homes or in hospitals. Remove all disease and suffering from the people and teach us to value life and health as gifts coming from You.

Grant us, O God, Your peace, and fill our hearts with unwavering faith in Your protection, with hope in Your help, and with love towards You and our neighbor.

For Yours is to show mercy and to save us, O our God, and to You we give glorify: Father and Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!

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.