

**20th Sunday Ordinary Year A**  
**MATT 15:21-28**  
**August 14, 2011**

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, God reveals that foreigners too can be saved if they follow His commands and live in His love.

We can understand this also as he says that His is the house for all peoples. With these statements about the house for all God's children I think of it like the Motel 6. Tom Bodette says "We'll leave the light on for you." For us, Christ is that light to help us find our way to our heavenly home. Have you heard the old saying, "Last one out, turn out the lights."? I picture myself walking out of Purgatory and hearing St. Peter calling down, "Hey Mickey, don't forget to turn out the lights!"

Anyone and everyone "can" be saved, but may not be saved. The big difference comes in the words, can and will. We can follow God's law and follow in the footsteps of His Son but will we? There is a great chasm between application of can and will but not between the beings He created.

From this passage of Paul's letter to the Romans, I sometimes feel that the Roman culture of Jesus' time is similar to our society of today. That was a time of self-centeredness, false gods, and false prophets. You can list your own examples for each of these three suggestions in today's world.

And both of these readings tie into our gospel story of the Canaanite woman. Isaiah prophecies that everyone will be saved if they wish to be. Paul tells us that everyone can and should expect and accept God's love and mercy.

Can you believe the persistence of that woman. Who gave her the right to keep pestering this important figure in the Jewish community; and just because her daughter was possessed? Really now!

After all, most everyone has a sickness or some other physical, emotional, financial or type of issues. And to go outside the confines of her own pagan culture was totally unheard of if not unacceptable.

Even Jesus seemed to be recognizing this disconnect. Of course, we know now that this was just the beginning of another lesson that He came to teach us.

The story of the Canaanite woman is used by Jesus to bring life to the words of His Father in the Covenant made to Abraham.

Have you ever had trouble getting the attention of your spouse, boss, teenage son or daughter? You can repeat yourself over and over to no avail. You can jump up and down or stomp your shoe on the table but nothing seems to work. That is, until you get right in their face and say “What gives!”

This woman had the faith needed to stand up to the Son of God and say, “What gives! You will allow scraps of food to fall and feed the dogs and I believe you will use some of that Grace of your Father to cure my daughter.”

In the New Testament, this is the only story that I remember where Jesus loses the debate. But in losing He wins by fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy.

I believe this, when, by identifying my personal ills and shortcomings, I pray even harder for God’s healing gifts. I don’t look to Him to ask ‘why’ my life’s situations are occurring, I plead with Him to tell me “how”.

How should I accept and work through my trials and crosses in a way that pleases Him the most. How can I keep my faith strong while suffering through what is happening in my life at this time. How can I keep from fearing that I will fail in my efforts to carry my simple crosses that no way compare to the Cross to Calvary.

I’ve mentioned before about my brother, Father Steve Hawkins. While visiting him in the ICU where he was on the ventilator and other machines, all of a sudden alarms started going off. I jumped to the side of his bed as the nurses were rushing in. One of them pushed the reset button and everything was ok.

But Steve, seeing the shock on my face, opened his eyes real wide and went limp. Then he started laughing at me. What else was a brother to do but punch him in the arm = that’s what I did.

The next day they removed the tubes and wires and we received a visit from the head of the Oncology Dept. of the James. He told Steve that the cancer had progressed to the point that there was nothing medically more they could do. So he was moved to a private room and a few days later he went, peacefully home to his eternal Father

Here is the part that I will always remember and encourage you to look for. Those last few days of being with his family and friends were the some of his happiest days. And for us, he was the instrument of courage to walk our individual journey from this life into the next. His sickness of the body did not overcome his belief that he was going somewhere better, and he seemed to me almost anxious for the trip.

In writing today's homily, it came to mind that S I C K is a four letter word! That makes it a word that no one wants to say. I'm sick // he's sick // she's sick.

My view is that every one of us has a sickness that began in the Garden of Eden and every one of us spends our life trying to cure ourselves of it. Our bodies are subject to physical, mental, emotional, and other conditions. These all are temporary, just as the life in this body is temporary.

Addressing SICK is important because our body is the gift our Creator gave each of us and we must make good choices for its care

The greatest sickness, though, is that of sin. Sin is a four letter word that will eternally deprive us of happiness, of God's love.

This is where our Lord's message today brings a positive ending. This is the time for each of us to look to the Canaanite woman as an unlikely model, yet a true one.

Even when we begin to feel that we are not getting some scrap of grace and support, follow her example of persistence and faith. Believe that your prayers are or soon will be answered. Be strong in praying to Jesus for the courage to face the physical and spiritual trials you are facing.

To end, there are two things I would like us all to consider.

First, in realizing that each of us has our life's issues to work through, let's not be judgmental in our thought, word and deed towards others. Treat everyone as the body of Christ for we truly all are.

Second, live your faith. Be an honorary Canaanite woman and show the world that your faith is strong and you will not let anyone or anything diminish it.

I repeat my brother's favorite prayer as often as I can: GOD IS GOOD !