



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 20 August 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today's Gospel (Mt 15:21-28) presents us a unique example of faith in Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman, a foreigner to the Jews. The scene unfolds as he is walking toward the cities of Tyre and Sidon, northwest of Galilee: it is here that the woman begs Jesus to heal her daughter, who — the Gospel says — “is severely possessed by a demon” (v. 22). The Lord, at first, seems not to hear this cry of pain, such that it causes the intervention of the disciples who intercede for her. Jesus' seeming indifference does not discourage this mother, who persists in her invocation.

This woman's inner strength, which enables her to overcome every obstacle, is to be found in her *maternal love* and in her *faith* that Jesus can grant her request. This makes me think of the strength of women. With their strength they are able to obtain great things. We have known many [such women]! We could say that it is love that stirs faith, and faith, for its part, becomes love's reward. Heartrending love for her daughter causes the woman to cry: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David” (v. 22). And her untiring faith in Jesus allows her not to become discouraged even in the face of his initial rejection; thus the woman “knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, help me’” (v. 25).

In the end, before such persistence, Jesus was in awe, nearly astonished, by the faith of a pagan woman. Therefore he acquiesces, saying: “‘O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed instantly” (v. 28). Jesus points to this humble woman as a model of unwavering faith. Her persistence in beseeching Christ's intervention is incentive for us not to become discouraged, not to despair when we are burdened by life's difficult trials. The Lord

does not turn away in the face of our needs and, if at times he seems insensitive to our requests for help, it is in order to put to the test and to strengthen our faith. We must continue to cry out like this woman: “Lord, help me! Lord, help me!”. In this way, with perseverance and courage. This is the courage needed in prayer.

This Gospel episode helps us to understand that we all need to grow in faith and fortify our trust in Jesus. He can help us to find our way, when we have lost the compass of our journey; when the road no longer seems flat but rough and arduous; when it is hard to be faithful to our commitments. It is important to nourish our faith every day, by carefully listening to the Word of God, with the celebration of the Sacraments, with personal prayer as a “cry” to him — “Lord, help me!” — and with concrete acts of charity toward our neighbour.

Let us entrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit, so that he may help us to persevere in faith. The Spirit instills courage in the heart of believers; he gives our life and our Christian witness the power of conviction and persuasion; he helps us to overcome skepticism toward God and indifference toward our brothers and sisters.

May the Virgin Mary render us ever more aware of our need of the Lord and of his Spirit; may she obtain for us a strong faith, full of love, and a love capable of making itself a supplication, a courageous supplication to God.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, we carry pain in our hearts over the terrorist attacks which, in these recent days, have claimed numerous victims in Burkina Faso, Spain and Finland. Let us pray for all the deceased and for their families; and let us implore the Lord, God of mercy and of peace, to free the world of this inhuman violence.

Let us pray together in silence and, then, to Our Lady.

[*Hail Mary....*]

I offer a cordial greeting to you, dear pilgrims from Italy and various countries. In particular, I greet the members of the French association *Roulons pour l'Espoir*, who have come by bicycle from Besançon; the new Seminarians with the Superiors of the North American College of Rome; the altar servers from Rivoltella, Brescia, and the boys and girls from Zevio, Verona. I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*

