

**Homily – Wednesday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time  
Televised Mass with Senior Staff – August 9, 2023**

The greatest work of God in this Gospel passage is not the exorcism of the Canaanite woman's daughter, but her witness of faith to the disciples. Jesus allows himself to appear contemptuous towards her. He does not seem like the Lord we know. But the humble attitude of the woman spurs the compassion of the disciples towards her.

God's words in the first reading – from the Book of Numbers – also sound very harsh to us. The story is based on primitive traditions. The sin-punishment sequence is repeated: the people distrust the Lord and break the covenant, for which God condemns them to waste away in the desert without entering the promised land. To us, Christians, this vengeful and enraged God does not seem much like the father of the prodigal son. Is this the same One who sent his only Son to the world to save us by suffering the consequences of our sins?

The explorers sent by Moses to the land of Canaan confirmed in their report that the country does indeed flow with milk and honey. But they went-on with a big "however." And "they spread discouraging reports..." Therefore, the people stopped believing, became discouraged and lost hope. Moses mysteriously prefigures Jesus. The words of condemnation attributed to God were really the consequence of having silenced God's promises in their hearts.

Such is the self-inflicted punishment that sin brings with it. But time is good medicine and. It brings forth a penitential prayer, like the Psalm: "We have sinned... we have committed crimes; we have

done wrong. (...) Moses, his chosen one, withstood him in the breach to turn back his destructive wrath.” Sin and disgrace are never the end of the story. God’s grace is.

In the gospel, it is not Jesus who enters the land of Canaan, but the Canaanite woman who comes to the Lord, calling him “Son of David.” She anticipates the mission the disciples would be given after the Resurrection. Are they worthy to sit down first at the King’s table to eat the bread of life that he offers them? Are we?

The words of the Canaanite woman describe the courage of faith, which is opposite to the contagious cowardice of the explorers sent by Moses: “Have pity on me, Lord. (...) help me.” Please, Lord, at least let us eat the leftovers that fall from the table of your mercy. Soon we will realize that as we look for breadcrumbs, we are given to break the Bread of Life open to others.

Pope Francis reminds us that our good Father is firm, not weak; he *“knows how to wait and knows how to forgive from the depths of his heart.”* As we are led out of the desert of disbelief, hopelessness and fear – overcoming the harsh silence we impose upon God’s promises in our hearts – his Holy Spirit enables us to enter the land – the life – to which we are sent. The apparently harsh conditions of the beatitudes “indeed flow with milk and honey.” (Nm).

Our Lady of Guadalupe, help our faith and our hope grow in the kind of courage that spurs compassion.