

WEDNESDAY, 18TH WEEK
THE FAITH OF AN OUTSIDER

Matthew 15: 21-28

That pagan woman showed a firm and persisting faith. The initial response of Jesus to her desperate cry for help was dead silence. It is like Jesus was giving her a cold shoulder. She would not take silence for an answer. More pressure mounted on her as she heard his disciples urging Jesus to send her away – a request which I find a bit over the top, putting myself in the shoes of the woman. The call to send her away downs the woman to her knees: ***“Please help me,”*** putting her foot down with her one request. As it turned out a vocal response came up from Jesus in a seemingly harsh and dismissive manner: ***“It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”***

Just as the woman is not put off by Jesus’ silence in the first place, she is far from being put off by his first rough and abrupt response. She picks up Jesus’ image of feeding the children rather than the house-dogs, (the people of Israel rather than the pagans), and turns it to her own advantage.

It is at this point that the Lord has no choice but reward her persistent faith and grant her request. In Our Lord’s mind the time had not yet come to bring the gospel to pagans; it would come later. Today we meet this woman who succeeded in bringing forward Our Lord’s timetable by her persistent faith.

At one point Our Lord spoke of a faith that can move mountains. This woman’s faith may not have moved mountains, but it certainly moved Jesus. This woman, who was in fact an outsider encourages all of us to remain faithful, even when the grounds for faithfulness seem to be very weak. She inspires us to keep seeking the Lord, even when the Lord appears to be silent and distant.