

TWENTIETH SUNDAY-CYCLE A

Let me ask you a question. In the stillness of your hearts, answer the question: Does God play favorites? Does God root for one team to beat another? If Notre Dame was playing a football game with a secular university, how many people would be wondering which side is God on? If it's Notre Dame, we *know* which side our Blessed Mother is on, but that's a different question!

Obviously, we know that God does not play favorites in matters like these. In fact, it would actually be unfair for God to favor one team over another, and God is not unfair is He? Or, do you think otherwise?

In our Gospel today, it seems that Jesus is treating the Canaanite woman whose daughter is tormented by a demon, rather cruelly. Initially, He even ignores her. He even goes so far as to call her "a dog." Hardly the response one would suppose from the Messiah!

It's important for us to remember that part of the mission of Jesus was to make known, first to the people of Israel, that the day of salvation they had been praying for for such a long time, was now at hand.

Jesus wanted to make clear to the Jewish people that HE was the long-promised Messiah, Who would forge a New and Eternal Covenant with His Blood, and would bring about a New Israel. From this New Israel, salvation was to be offered to ALL peoples.

When the Canaanite woman approached Jesus, these things had not yet been fulfilled. Nevertheless, Jesus saw the depth of her faith and responded in a loving way, curing her daughter. By doing so, our Lord went beyond being *fair* to her, He gave her a very special privilege. He allowed her to partake of the Kingdom of God. What a blessing this was for her, and what a blessing for us that we have this Gospel reading to remind US of the love and generosity of Jesus for each one of us!

So now, what is Jesus really teaching us through this episode? There are a number of things. First, life is *not fair*. We need to get rid of that notion once and for all. Evil and suffering are a part of our human existence. Some, we bring on ourselves; some we do not. Jesus reaffirms that salvation is indeed *for all people*. He teaches us that salvation truly is meant for all people. He teaches us that *humility and persistence* are good attitudes to have seeking our Lord's grace! And, Jesus is teaching us that God *does not play favorites*; He desires to bring His love and mercy to all who turn to Him.

It seems that our Lord is teaching His Church to show generosity of forgiveness through His holy sacraments, to all who sincerely strive to reach out to Him. Who blessed we are; and how gifted we all are to share this faith, this truth, this life with others! May it always be so!