

August 14, 2020

To Stretch Our Minds and Hearts

The readings for this weekend are marvelous and they encourage us to stretch our minds and hearts. Some of us older folks were reared by loving parents and teachers to think that we Catholics were so special that maybe we were the only ones going to heaven! The first reading, Isaiah 56:1, 6-7, is an invitation from the mouth of the Lord promising that "foreigners who join themselves to the Lord," love him, and keep his covenant will find their offerings acceptable to God. "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." This must have been a difficult saying for the Jewish people to hear, since they saw only themselves as God's chosen people.

In the gospel, Jesus is even clearer in what he does, making the point more forcefully than mere words. In Matthew 15:21-28, a Canaanite woman, a foreigner who belongs to a traditional enemy of the Israelites, approaches Jesus because she believes her daughter is "tormented by a demon." (She could have been epileptic or suffering from emotional difficulties and, what's worse, any disability was thought to be punishment for sin.) The disciples want Jesus to send her away and the usually compassionate Jesus replies to them, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." She falls at his feet and begs him, "Lord, help me." I'll leave it to you to read the rest of their interchange in your bible, but realize that he initially replies with what seems to be a great insult. She is not put off by his response, picks up his words and uses them to persuade him to help! Then he replies, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that hour.

Scripture scholars have various explanations for Jesus' initial reply to her, but many have written that it is a sign of Jesus' need to come to a clearer understanding of his mission in life. He is to be Savior of the whole world, not just the Jewish people. But like all of us, his awareness as a human being needed to grow, needed to mature and this woman was the impetus for that broadening of his vision. How about us? Can we fathom the Spirit of God working through the many religious traditions in our world? We can surely be faithful Catholics, absolutely committed to our faith, and be respectful and grateful for all the healing and other grace-filled actions shown by the members of all faith traditions and no faith tradition, especially during this pandemic time. The documents of Vatican II remind us of this truth. Is there anyone or any group of people in this time of our society's great polarization whom we feel cannot be touched by God's grace? Perhaps, this is the invitation to us this weekend?

May our loving God bless each of us and all those now in particular need!

An Invitation for You Adults to Receive Your Sacraments

Are you one of those Catholics who were baptized, but never made your First Communion or your confirmation because your family moved, your folks weren't coming to church or you weren't interested at that point in your life? It's not too late to prepare yourself and receive either or both of these sacraments. There are weekly sessions offered by the parish if you've felt a nudge and would like to complete your reception of the sacraments. Please leave a message for me at the rectory at 650-589-2800 or send me a note at sheralmar@saintroberts.org, and I'll gladly get back to you, so that we can have a conversation.

Or if you know of someone – maybe a friend or family member - who has expressed some curiosity about becoming a Catholic, please refer that person to me as well. Our sessions will begin on Zoom in September.

Thank you. *Sr. Sheral*