**32nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

 How often do we take the first sign of an obstacle as a message to quit trying? I studied hard, but didn’t get a good grade. I didn’t get that job I wanted. I tried to exercise and diet but didn’t lose hardly any weight, so I’m just going to forget it. We live in a world that is a push button, internet buying, fast paced consumer society which conditions us with sometimes unreasonable expectations. However, as the Lord reminds us He says “My ways are not your ways and my thoughts are not your thoughts (Isaiah 55.)”

I would guess that this might be even more pronounced in our faith relationship with God. I prayed for help and I didn’t get any. I prayed to be healed from my illness and I was still sick. I attended Liturgy and received communion and I didn’t really feel different. I went to confession and I still sinned again afterwards. Why bother? God doesn’t love me.

 Before we go down these roads any further, let’s take a look at the Canaanite Woman from today’s gospel reading. Jesus was journey to district of Tyre and Sidon and the Canaanite woman comes to Him shouting, pleading for Him to heal her daughter of a demon. How does Jesus respond to her? He completely ignores her. Even after Jesus’ disciples tell Him to send her away, she draws very near to Him and kneels before Jesus saying, ?Lord, help me? How often has God told us, No?? Do we give up at this point?

 The Canaanite woman does not. She does not accept His rebuke but comes back at Him with some profound words, In other words, I’m not giving up. I’ll take whatever little you will offer to me. How does Jesus respond this time? He openly acknowledges her great faith and grants her wish and heals her daughter instantly.

 Someone might ask, why is Jesus playing this game with the Canaanite woman? She’s obviously sincere. She came to Him. Why didn’t Jesus just heal her daughter right away? St. Theodore of Mopsuestia implies that Jesus, by delaying His answer, is giving her opportunity to deepen her faith. Is it any different than how we raise our own children? Do we give them what they want as soon as they ask for it? No, we usually delay in one way or another to build their character and deepen their appreciation for whatever they receive.

Praying with faith can be compare to the peace of paper. We can write down everything what we ask in God and just give Him to sing to make sure He gives us everything what we want. But this is not what it means to pray with faith.

One monk planted an olive tree and started to pray: “ O God , please send a little rain on my tree” and God sent a rain. Next day this monk prayed: “O, God please send a little sunshine on my tree. And on the third day monk prayed: “ O, God please send a little frost on my three so it will get stronger”. God sent the frost and tree died. Monk got very upset and went to his friend to tell him a story that happened to him. But his friend said to him: “ I also have an olive tree, but I prayed differently I said to God you are the creator of all and you know what is better for my tree. I just asked God to take care about it and He does it.

God uses persistence in prayer to mold, even transform, our desires, to change how we pray and even what we are praying for so that we gradually come to pray closer to the heart of God’s will.

The Apostle Paul prayed three times for a “thorn in the flesh” to be removed. He never tells us what it is, simply that it is painful, a source of torment, “a messenger of Satan.” When God didn’t answer his prayer as asked, Paul changed how he was praying.  He prayed that God would help him to rely on God’s grace, God’s strength, God’s power, which was made perfect in Paul’s weakness.

No doubt you have your story of frustrations in prayer. Persistence does not guarantee that you will get what you asked for, but it does promise you will get something better and actually closer to your heart’s deepest desire. God will answer your prayers. Perhaps not when we wanted or even HOW we wanted, but in a way that we truly longed for in the depths of our soul.

Love God, no matter what answer He gives you, no matter how He answers you, no matter when He answers you. Love God, don’t give up. Amen

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