

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 20, 2023



The Canaanite Woman

Unbelief vs. faith – quarreling vs. patience – arrogance vs. humility

By *faith*, from her own free will, she approaches Christ. After the first rebuke by Christ, she shows *patience* in her heart. Her *humility* is shown by voluntarily behaving as a slave being punished; no matter how small the grace imparted to her might be, it will be sufficient for her salvation.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

Holyday Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

Confessions: First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

Department Telephone: 508.363.6246

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MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, August 19 *Vigil of the 20th Sunday of the Liturgical Year*

4:00pm +Michael Desimone, father of a priest

Sunday, August 20 *Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am Seeking divine help to be freed from addiction

4:00pm For a husband's improved outlook

Monday, August 21 *Saint Pius X, pope*¹

12:00nn +For Chuck and the eternal repose of his soul

Tuesday, August 22 *The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary*¹

12:00nn In gratitude to God for successful surgery

Wednesday, August 23

12:00nn Asking God for an increase in personal peace and confidence

Thursday, August 24 *Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle*

12:00nn +Jeff Bradshaw by his family

Friday, August 25

12:00nn Asking God to heal Jack Mungovan

Saturday, August 26 *Vigil of the 21st Sunday of the Liturgical Year*

4:00pm +Brother Jerome Leo Hughes, OSB

Sunday, August 27 *Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am +Richard Covello—Month's Mind Mass

4:00pm Seeking divine help to do the right thing

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday* is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. **Solemnities** honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. **Feasts** must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. **Memorials** are of two types: Either the observance is an **obligatory memorial**¹ or an **optional memorial**².

Toward a Better Understanding of This Sunday's Gospel

Earlier in Saint Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus makes the Twelve apostles partners in His mission, besides telling them to proclaim that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand, He also gave them this instruction, "Do not go into pagan territory or a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10: 5-7). Despite moving from village to village, even when He was forced to "withdraw to the region of Tyre and Sidon," Jesus always remained primarily within the confines of Israel and limited His mission to that area. Seemingly out of the blue, a Canaanite woman shouts this out to Jesus, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon." The Canaanites were one of the pre-biblical occupants of the Promised Land. Eventually, after having conquered Canaan, a deep hatred developed between those two peoples. To a certain degree, such animosity could account for why, at first, the woman's request elicited no reaction from Jesus. Undaunted, she persists in trailing Him and His disciples who saw her only as a nuisance and wanted to be rid of her. The problem Jesus faced was not the woman, but the scope of His mission – He "was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Like what happened during the wedding feast at Cana, when Mary said to her Son, "They have no wine," yet, Jesus answered her by saying, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not come" (Jn 2:3-4), this Canaanite woman parallels Mary's intervention in Cana. In both of those instances, the real issue is Christ's fidelity to the mission that the Father had given Him. Mary knew her Son could remedy the situation in Cana and, so, did this distraught Gentile mother likewise believe that Jesus could cure her tormented daughter. The pagan woman goes to Jesus—it is noteworthy that He did not approach her. First, she rendered homage, and addressed Him not only as Son of David, but also as Lord. By calling Jesus Lord or Kyrie (Gk. Κύριος) that is proper behavior for a true disciple since it acknowledges Him as Master or Lord in relation to a disciple or learner. Moreover, noting Jesus to be Lord serves to manifest the kind of faith in who Jesus really is—the faith necessary as a prerequisite for anyone seeking a miracle. Having witnessed how uninterested Jesus was in her plight, if He cured the possessed daughter of a pagan that would be a slap in the face to His co-religionists.

Not in insult then were His words spoken, but calling her forth, He revealed the treasure laid up in her. Do you see the woman's wisdom, how she did not venture so much as to say a word against it, nor was stung by other men's praises, nor was indignant at the reproach? Do you see her constancy? ... He used the name of a dog, but she added also the dog's act. Do you see this woman's humility? Yea, therefore did He put her off, that He might proclaim aloud this saying, that He might crown the woman. "Be it unto you even as you will." Now what He says is like this: "Your faith indeed is able to effect even greater things than these: nevertheless, Be it unto you even as you will."
This was akin to that voice that said, "Let the Heavens be, and it was."

Her great faith in Jesus, in fact, made their pale faith in Him look shameful. When she begs Jesus, "Lord, help me," He responds saying, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs (Gk. *κυνάριον*)" that response seems heartless or even cruel. The reference to children, though, is to the children of Israel. Dog or more accurately little dog (Gk. *κυνάριον*) was a polemical term used against pagans. The Israelites were fed with the goods of the covenant, among those gifts was the manna or bread from heaven. This pagan woman understood the implications of what Jesus had said. In turn, then, she adds, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." Recognizing that pagans were at a distinct disadvantage and not stealing what was not yet theirs, she foretells a day yet-to-come when the Gentiles will have a legitimate share. It is this Canaanite woman's great faith that is the prelude to her daughter's healing and the breaching of the boundaries between Gentiles and Israel's lost sheep. During His earthly life, the mission of the Lord Jesus was restricted to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The persistence of the Canaanite woman and her great faith promised an end to the privileged position that was belonged to those "first called" by divine election. Once raised from the dead and with the Risen Christ poised to ascend back to the Father, the Lord will summon the eleven to Galilee and gave them the great commission to go and make disciples of all the nations. Sr. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (1891 – 1942) once exchanged letters in regard to a Carmelite lay sister who had died, but she also mentioned the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) who would die a month or so later. She wrote, "It has always been far from me to think that God's mercy allows itself to be circumscribed by the visible Church's boundaries. God is truth. All who seek truth seek God, whether this is clear to them or not" (*Letter to Sr. Adelgundis Jaegerschmidt*, OSB). This was the growing realization of the disciples as they watched how Jesus treated foreigners and pagans. Jesus praised the faith of the Gentiles (Mt 8, Jn 4). While physical healing or the exorcism of demons may be dramatic, such miracles are often not necessarily in our best interests. Anything which draws us closer to God is wholly good and it would be against God's very nature to deny it. This is even truer in regard to sin. Endowed with free will, the desire to choose will always be a hindrance, whereas God's grace is always present to anyone who is sincerely seeking conversion. Since goodness is God's essence and faith in Christ a prerequisite for the miraculous, the Lord Jesus cannot refuse a faith-filled request regardless of who made it or where it came from. Saint Augustine concluded, "The woman was ignored, not that mercy might be denied but that desire might be enkindled; not only that desire might be enkindled but... that humility might be praised" (*Sermo 77.1*).

National Eucharistic Revival - Phase Two: The Diocesan Year: Assumption of Mary, Ark of the New Covenant

The Law of God set the children of Abraham apart, revealing a hint of the concept of holiness, whereas the Gentiles were like savage dogs in their wild, sinful ways. By corrupting our human nature through sinful thoughts, words, or deeds, we, too, become like wild dogs. Yet, by turning toward God for forgiveness and salvation in the Church, you could say that sinners are being domesticated through the grace of God and the practice of the virtues. Nonetheless, all of us still struggle with sinful impulses, making even the holiest among us like *little dogs* abiding in the Master's house. In the Gospel, Jesus states, "It is not fair to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." According to Saint John, Christ is the Bread from heaven and, so, it is improper to throw what is precious even to domesticated dogs. The food of the children is the Eucharistic banquet of which only true sons and daughters of God are worthy to partake. Described as little dogs, who still struggle with sin, in a sense, no

one is truly worthy to receive the Bread from heaven. However, by approaching Holy Communion with humility and repentance then those who receive are like the Canaanite woman who said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." With humility and faith, we approach the Eucharistic banquet to receive heavenly fragments that come from the altar or the master's table.



THE QUEENSHIP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

A novena or eight-day period began with the feast commemorating the Virgin Mary's Assumption into heaven and it will conclude with the observance of her Queenship on August 22. At the close of the first international Marian Year, called to commemorate the centenary of the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception, Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical *Ad caeli reginam* establishing the feast of the Queenship of Mary. Originally, it was observed on May 31, but after the post-conciliar reorganization of the liturgical year, it was transferred to the octave day that culminates Mary's Assumption "in order to bring out more clearly...the Blessed Virgin Mary's Queenship and her Assumption." Coupled with that move, since 1944, August 22nd had been designated as the day to honor the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pope Paul VI moved the celebration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the Saturday, immediately after the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, closely associating the Heart of Jesus with Mary's Heart. This means, in practice, that the day honoring the Immaculate Heart of Mary is observed on the third Saturday after Pentecost. The reversing of those two Marian feasts, at least in part, recognizes the fact that Mary's Queenship is closely tied with her Assumption, body and soul, into heaven.

Understanding Mary as Queen of Heaven or Great Lady

In the Hebrew Bible, the title *gebirah* (Heb. *gēbirā*) was usually applied to the mother of the reigning king and while it literally means *Great Lady*, due to its repeated ascription to the Queen Mother, those two implications have become synonymous. In addition, due to the fact that the kings of Israel often had multiple wives, his mother was often the royal confidante in serious matters of state. By comparing the Queenship of Mary with the *Gebirah*, the latter notion deepens our understanding of the former. The Queen Mother often played a significant role in who would succeed the king after he died. When there were multiple heirs to the throne, it often happened that the least likely candidate became king, though, from the strictly legal point of view it was the first-born son who should succeed to the throne. As the *Gebirah*, the Great Lady could be the regent and even influence the selection of the heir to the throne. As a result, she was responsible for his reign and closely linked with the exercise of her son's kingship. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is closely related to Christ's kingship and her whole being is involved in the spread of His Kingdom. In contrast to many of the *gebirah* (Pl. queen mothers), Mary did not seek the throne for her Son out of personal ambition. She was the handmaid of the Lord, even to the point of sacrificing her motherly rights for our sake. During periods of the Israelite monarchy, the *Gebirah* often exerted great influence because her authority was based upon her role and not her person. In Israel, the queen mother preceded her son in existence and, at times, she would rule in his stead (2 Kgs 10:13). As Mary our Mother and Queen, the Virgin never ruled in place of her Son, though as His Mother, because no Son can resist the requests of His Mother, Jesus was inclined to listen to Mary and do what she asked of Him, as was the case at

Cana of Galilee. The queen mother of Israel often interceded with the king on behalf of his subjects. As arguably the most influential member of the royal court, she was the preferred advocate. Bathsheba, as the mother of Solomon, would be an example of the quintessential *Gebirah*. Abishag was a member of David's harem, which Solomon inherited. Then Adonijah's request to the *gebirah* implies a challenge to Solomon's accession to the throne, which exposes Adonijah to being seen as a suspected insurrectionist that could cost him his life, so this appeal was made. "Adonijah, son of Haggith, came to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon. 'Do you come as a friend?' she asked. 'In peace,' he answered and, he added, 'I have something to say to you.' She replied, 'Speak.' So he said: 'You know that the kingship was mine, and all Israel expected me to be king. But the kingship passed me by and went to my brother [Solomon]; by the Lord's will it went to him. But now there is one favor I would ask of you. Do not refuse me.' And she said, 'Speak on.' He said, 'Please ask King Solomon, who will not refuse you, to give me Abishag the Shunamite to be my wife.' Bathsheba replied, 'Very well, I will speak to the king for you.' Then Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, and the king stood up to meet her and paid her homage. Then he sat down upon his throne, and a throne was provided for the king's mother, who sat at his right. 'There is one small favor I would ask of you. Do not refuse me.' 'Ask it, my mother," the king said to her, "for I will not refuse you.' So she said, "Let Abishag the Shunamite be given to your brother Adonijah for his wife" (1 Kgs 2:13-21). The Virgin Mary's queenly function consists in interceding on our behalf, too. It is anchored in her earthly role as Mother of the Redeemer and Mother of the redeemed.

Conclusion

The late Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, in his Angelus Message of November 26, 2006 said this, "The Virgin Mary was associated in a very special way with Christ's kingship. God asked her, a humble young woman of Nazareth, to become Mother of the Messiah and Mary responded to this request with her whole self, joining her unconditional 'yes' to that of her Son, Jesus, and making herself obedient with him even in his sacrifice. This is why God exalted her above every other creature and Christ crowned her Queen of Heaven and earth." The *Gebirah* was clearly the most important woman in the Kingdom of Israel, even though most of the kings had multiple wives, he only had one mother. Thus, the *Gebirah* of the eternal Davidic Kingdom of Jesus Christ is Mary of Nazareth. She appears in this role in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 12:1) - "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" - this is clearly a reference to Mary because subsequently, you read this, "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne," which is clearly Jesus who, because Christ is King, Mary His Mother is Queen of heaven and earth.