

Do you ever feel "put-off" or ignored by the Lord?

Today, we read the gospel passage, apparently embarrassing, in which Jesus treats a Canaanite woman hard. It describes the only occasion in which Jesus ministered outside of Jewish territory. (*Tyre and Sidon were fifty miles north of Israel and still exist today in modern Lebanon.*) This Gentile woman, a foreigner who was not a member of the Jewish people, puts Jesus on the spot by pleading for his help. At first Jesus seemed to pay no attention to her. He does not speak to her, then he says that he came only for the people of Israel, and then offers the woman with the undignified title of "dog", and this made his disciples feel embarrassed.

Jesus first tests the woman's faith

What did Jesus mean by the expression "throwing bread to the dogs"? The Jews often spoke of the Gentiles with arrogance and insolence as "unclean dogs" since the Gentiles did not follow God's law and were excluded from God's covenant and favor with the people of Israel. For the Greeks the "*dog*" was a symbol of dishonor and was used to describe a shameless and audacious woman. *There is another reference to "dogs" in Matthew's Gospel where Jesus says to his disciples, "Do not give to dogs what is holy" (Matt 7:6).*

Jesus acts strangely, unusually, to test the woman to awaken faith in her. He tests this woman's faith to see if she is earnest in receiving *holy things* from the hand of a holy God. Jesus, no doubt, spoke with a smile rather than

with an insult because this woman immediately responds with wit and faith, saying: - "even the dogs eat the crumbs".

Then we see Jesus praising this Gentile woman for her faith and for her love. She made the misery of her child her own and she was willing to suffer humiliation in order to obtain healing for her loved one. She also had indomitable persistence. Her faith grew in contact with the person of Jesus. She *began with a request and she ended on her knees in worshipful prayer to the living God.*

Brothers and sisters, no one who ever sought Jesus with earnest faith - whether Jew or Gentile - was refused his help. Do you seek the Lord Jesus with expectant faith?