

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Feb 13th 2014

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. In today's Gospel reading, compassion is the response to a mother whose necessity is her daughter's life. The mother is not of the Jewish tradition or faith, but has heard of this Jesus and his command even over the unclean spirits.

This story and the following healing of a man with a hearing difficulty, ends a chapter of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. They have ears, but do not hear and eyes but do not see. They like arguing of course about how Jesus does not fit the profile of the Messiah.

We hear the cry for help from a loving mother for her daughter and she has crossed over the boundaries into Israel to whom Jesus has been sent and to whom he is to feed the Children. This becomes the tension which her faith, based on necessity, moves Jesus. "Dog" - household pet or not - was the term the Jews used for those outside the limits of their nation. The mother has a clever comeback when Jesus remarks that he has come first to feed Israel. She responds with a verbal invention which her necessity provokes. She will gladly eat the saving crumbs from the table of the Jews, if only her daughter would be clean.

I am aware that there are many personal, national and international necessities with which to come to the feet of Jesus. I have found that when I come to pray with Jesus he seems to be at my feet and is asking for a quiet time of his blessings and encouraging me to be more and more peaceful with myself. He invites me to cast out or put aside my unclean spirits. In a while Jesus moves me out to deal with as many necessities as I can that day with as many clever inventions as are appropriate.

Worries can be the mother of discouragement and isolation. Prayer is a meeting with God's grace that reinvents my spirit and my graced life.

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