

## 'GOD'S SILENCE AS AN INVITATION' - HOMILY - 20 AUGUST 2017

Important challenges in today's Gospel passage include:

- overcoming barriers of culture, race, sex and tradition
- insights into becoming inclusive
- understanding Mission
- understanding prayer, silence and response

Let us reflect today on prayer, silence and response.

Matthew 15:21-28 begins

*“Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon.  
Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting,  
‘Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.’  
But he did not answer her at all.  
And his disciples came and urged him,  
saying, ‘Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.’  
He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’”*

### SILENT

We wonder at times about God being silent when we ask for something.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### WHAT IS OUR OWN DISPOSITION?

Let us reflect on that sentence.

*“But he did not answer her at all.”*

It doesn't say that Jesus didn't hear her and her plea.

Jesus hears her.

Literally the Biblical Greek can read

*“But he did not answer her a word”.*

### OPPORTUNITY AND SPACE BEFORE GOD

Jesus responded by not saying a spoken word.

His response was wordless.

This gives the **space** for the disciples and then the Canaanite woman

**to show initiative and approach Jesus.**

The disciples relate how she was shouting after them.

The disciples want her sent away because of her shouting after them.

Jesus does not tell her to go away.

### HOW OFTEN ARE WE STRESSED, AND WE WANT PEOPLE JUST TO GO AWAY?

The response of Jesus to her shouting is wordless and an opportunity for her.

The second time, she does not shout like before.

She comes and kneels before Jesus and asks *“Lord, help me.”*

### His wordless response now leads to opportunities:

- 1) Dialogue with the disciples about his mission
- 2) Action of the Canaanite woman to **come** to Jesus, **kneel** in respect before Jesus and **ask** Jesus for help.  
She doesn't mention her daughter again though she seeks her healing.  
She says *Lord, help me.*
- 3) Dialogue with the Canaanite woman, this giving her the space to show her faith.
- 4) Jesus proclaiming her faith.
- 5) Jesus healing her daughter

The Gospel continues:

*"But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.'*

*He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.'*

*She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.'*

*Then Jesus answered her,*

*'Woman, great is your faith!*

*Let it be done for you as you wish.'*

*And her daughter was healed instantly."*

### CARING FOR OTHERS AND OURSELVES

We don't need to do all the talking to God.

Sometimes God responds to us in silence, giving us the opportunity and space to come closer.

The Canaanite woman not only has her prayer of healing answered for her daughter, but also **time before Jesus for herself**. She is affirmed.

For all people who are **Carers** at home or at work, this passage offers insights into caring for ourselves too before God.

### FRIDAY NIGHT PRAYER VIGILS

Beginning on Friday night September 8<sup>th</sup>, our parish will offer an opportunity for **Silence and Space before God** each Friday night, up to 2020, between 7pm and 8pm. Sometimes there will be short reflections, some music and significant silence before God. Groups and Individual Parish Members will have opportunities to host such nights in our church.

Let us join now with Pope Francis' intention for the people of **Barcelona** and those who were killed, and those injured and/or traumatised by the terror attack this week.

We add an intention for the Australians affected, and for the young boy missing.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – God's Silence as An Invitation – 20 August 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/082017.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook20082017>]