

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost Matthew 15:21-28

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (KJV)

The present Gospel is read as part of the Divine Liturgy on the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost each year. Attentive listeners in parish churches and monasteries hear the Gospel and are to take it to heart.

With each reading of the Gospel, change is expected among the listeners. The Divine Liturgy is served for all present to actively participate with the full heart, mind and soul.

The Divine Liturgy enriches, nourishes and changes lives for the better for individuals actively participating. The Gospel readings contain the known life, words and lessons of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Gospel provides nourishment for the hunger of the soul. The Gospel offers the wisest instructions for the believer's life. Gospel readings occur within God's Holy Church and are understood in the context of the Church.

The present Gospel verifies Jesus' love for children. Jesus healed the mother's daughter vexed by the devil. The mother's strong faith and persistence in seeking healing for her daughter were recognized by Jesus.

Parents of every generation have had sons or daughters vexed by the devil. Often parents do not know where to turn and are frustrated with a child that is demon-possessed and exhibiting bizarre behavior.

God's Holy Church is where parents are able to bring their children from the time of birth and feel completely welcomed. The parish church is where children are firmly and lovingly welcome from infancy. Infant baptism is customary,

Attentive and interested parents learn the fundamentals of child bearing and raising in God's Holy Church. Believing parents are faithful in attending the Divine services of the Church.

Welcoming parishes go a long way in helping parents in raising their children. Infants crying in the Divine Liturgy is Holy Noise to God. Children actively present in the Divine Liturgy assures the parish's future.

Parents struggling with raising their children benefit from the wisdom and nourishment of the Divine Liturgy. Parents and children unite with the Lord Jesus Christ when receiving the Precious Body and Blood of Christ.

Raising children is a challenge in every generation. Each generation has its own set of worldly issues to contend with. Parents immersed in the life of the Church benefit from the Lord Jesus Christ in their child-rearing.

The mother in the present Gospel was astute enough to know the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The mother loved her daughter and was resolute in seeking healing for her daughter.

The Lord Jesus Christ recognized the mother's strong faith. Jesus healed the daughter. Parish churches are restorative havens for parents struggling with raising their children in contemporary times.

The parish church is a haven and refuge providing God's healing and nourishing love. Jesus Christ is clear about His lasting and immeasurable love for children. The Church consistently proclaims Jesus' love for children.

Jesus said centuries ago: "Suffer little **children**, and forbid them not, to **come** unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 19:14) Healthy parishes ensure that children are welcome and loved.

Parents struggling with raising their children need to feel the support and love of the parish church in addressing their struggles. Being a parent is a great responsibility.

God's Church is where parental responsibility is best learned and discerned. The parish church is where parents can replenish their strength and gain the wisdom necessary for raising their sons and daughters.

Jesus Christ's love for parents is manifested in the current Gospel. The mother in today's Gospel experienced Jesus' love for her and for her daughter. Parents benefit by being reassured of Jesus' love for them.

Healthy parishes serve as the reassuring presence of Jesus Christ for parents. Parishes filled with Christ's love manifest that love in all parish undertakings. The Gospel is alive at best when alive in the hearts, minds and souls of all parishioners.

The Gospel for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost addresses a mother's challenge of having a daughter vexed by the devil. Raising sons and daughters can be vexing at times for every parent.

Thank God for God's Holy Church where parents can turn to for help, wisdom and strength in raising their children. Thank God for the Lord Jesus Christ's verification of His love for children.

Hope remains for all parents in the Church. Jesus' love and healing power are always present for parents. Widespread joy comes when Christ's love and healing are embraced in strong and resolute faith.