

The Thirty Sixth 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)

Believers face the actions of the devil in daily life. The devil may vex a family member, a friend or coworker. The devil can influence one or members of a parish. The devil's actions and influence are a constant concern.

Believers must be constantly vigilant when dealing with the devil's influence and actions. Being fully nourished by, focused on and centered in Jesus Christ is the only way to successfully deal with the devil.

The mother in the present Gospel focused her attention on Jesus Christ. She was resolute and committed in seeking Jesus' attention and healing. The mother wanted her daughter free of the devil's influence.

Persons vexed by the devil are disruptive to daily life. When the devil's actions manifest in the home, at work or in a parish, disorder and discomfort arise. Through the present Gospel, the Church teaches the way to deal with the devil.

The devil is overcome and defeated by Jesus Christ. The present Gospel is a reminder for believers to be fully focused on and centered in Christ. The mother in the present Gospel demonstrates the value of seeking mercy from Christ.

The value of strong faith in Jesus Christ is verified in the present Gospel. The strong faith of the caring mother resulted in her daughter being healed and freed of the devil's influence.

For believers to experience daily life free from the trauma and influence of the devil, Jesus Christ must completely fill the heart, mind and soul. At any moment, believers can increase their personal commitment to Christ through prayer,

The believer's mind can firmly direct attention to Jesus Christ seeking Christ's intervention to overcome the devil. The mother in the Gospel proved by example the power of strong faith in Christ.

The present Gospel has inspired and educated believers down through the centuries. The present Gospel offers hope to parents, workers and parishioners dealing with the actions of the devil.

Jesus Christ is the answer for dealing with the devil. Personal self-assessment will reveal if the believer's commitment to Christ is firm, resolute and complete.

Honest self-assessment will reveal aspects of life that weaken personal faith.

Jesus Christ is a constant source of nourishment through prayer, reading the Scriptures or attending the Divine services. Jesus nourishes and strengthens believers when they partake of Holy Communion.

The wise use of daily time keeps believers strong in faith and centered in Christ. Prayers to Christ are possible throughout the day. Short prayers seeking Christ's mercy keep the believer strong and focused.

The road to God's Heavenly Kingdom can be long. The devil will always appear in certain forms on the journey through life. Seekers of God's Kingdom need to remain strong throughout the journey. Believers must take care of themselves.

The devil will take advantage of moments of weakness. The devil attacks when believers are tired. Being firmly rooted and nourished in Christ keeps the believer fit for the battles that arise during the journey.

The Church provides learning opportunities from infancy until departure from this life for believers to grow in Christ. The Holy Mysteries and Divine services of the Church keep the believer focused and strong.

Prayerful support for one another among believers helps when the battle against evil arises. Mothers and fathers dealing with a son or daughter vexed by the devil benefit from the support of other family members and friends.

Increased prayer among like-minded believers helps the person dealing with the devil in personal life. Leaders in the workplace or in a parish need prayerful support and encouragement to deal with issues created and fostered by the devil.

The Lord Jesus Christ is always present and within reach. Jesus Christ is always the answer to the questions of life. Jesus Christ is the answer to the problems of life. Jesus Christ is the constant joy of life.

Jesus Christ is ever-present in the Church. Growing in Christ is expected for the believer in the Church. Opportunities to grow are limited only by the faith of the believer.

When momentary battles are lost to the devil, wise believers immediately repent and begin anew. Jesus provides mercy, forgiveness and the direction for renewal. Jesus Christ provides the wisdom for action.

When Jesus hung upon the Cross, the darkness seemed to indicate death was final and Jesus was finished. Jesus rose from the tomb. Resolute believers fighting the devil rise with the Victorious and Resurrected Christ to continue the battle.

The Thirty Sixth Sunday after Pentecost. Transfer of the Relics of Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer. January 19/February 11, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic