Thursday of the Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 7:24-30): Jesus went to the district of Tyre. He entered a house and wanted no one to know about it, but he could not escape notice. Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him. She came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth, and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, “Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” She replied and said to him, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s scraps.” Then he said to her, “For saying this, you may go. The demon has gone out of your daughter.” When the woman went home, she found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

“Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him. She came and fell at his feet.”

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Today we are shown the faith of a woman who did not belong to the chosen people, but who had confidence that Jesus could cure her daughter. In fact, that mother “was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth, and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter” (Mk 7:26). Pain and love lead her to ask insistently, without regard for contempt, delays, or indignity. And she got what she asked for, because “when the woman went home, she found the child lying in bed and the demon gone” (Mk 7:30).

Saint Augustine said that many do not get what they ask for because they are “aut mali, aut male, aut mala.” Either they are bad and the first thing they should ask for is to be good; or they ask badly, without insistence, instead of doing so with patience, humility, faith and love; or they ask for bad things that if received would harm the soul or the body or others. We must strive, then, to ask well. The Syrophoenician woman is a good mother, she asks well (“she came and fell at his feet”) and asks for something good (that “he drive the demon out of her daughter”).

The Lord moves us to use perseveringly the prayer of petition. Certainly, there are other types of prayer—adoration, atonement, prayer of thanksgiving—but Jesus insists that we frequently pray for petitions.

Why? There could be many reasons: because we need God’s help to reach our goal; because it expresses hope and love; because it is a cry of faith. But there is one that is perhaps not considered: God wants things to be a little as we want them. In this way, our request—which is a free act—united with the

omnipotent freedom of God, makes the world as God wants it and somewhat as we want it. The power of prayer is marvelous!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Our prayer is not heard because we ask badly, without trust in God or lacking humility and perseverance.” (Saint Augustine)

- “Jesus praises the Syro-Phoenician woman who asks with insistence for the healing of her daughter. Insistence, even though she is tired, but this is an attitude of prayer. Saint Teresa speaks of prayer as a negotiation with the Lord.” (Francis)

- “Just as Jesus prays to the Father and gives thanks before receiving his gifts, so he teaches us filial boldness: ‘Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will’ (Mk 1:24). Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt (Mt 21:22): ‘all things are possible to him who believes’ (Mk 9:23) (...)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2610)