

Daily Homily
Our Lady of Lourdes
Optional Memorial
5 Week in Ordinary Time, Thursday
11 February 2021
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I think I preach on this gospel every year when it comes around. One of the most jarring pieces of Scripture for many. Did Jesus actually insult this woman... insult her child... perhaps, her whole family? Did Jesus just call them dogs? In any culture and at any time, this is never a good thing. There is no explaining this away.

This woman, she is a Greek, and she is begging for help – save her daughter from a demon. Jesus, a Jew, replies that he must tend to his own “children,” his own people first.

Her response is the spiritual life summed up: “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s scraps.” She knows her place before the Lord. In another place in scripture, Jesus warns his disciples that if they are going to follow him then do not take positions of honor, do not seat yourself at the head of the table, rather go to the lowest place... and while there, you may (or may not) be called to come up higher.

This woman has done just that. She knows her place before God. She doesn’t want a whole meal, just a scrap. She doesn’t want a place of honor, she has already placed herself, not AT the table but UNDER the table with the dogs. Which of the Apostles can say that they would go there and be satisfied with only a scrap and with a position under the table? Actually, don’t they argue at one point about who is the greatest?

But it’s only with the request of a scrap and in the position of being under the table that Jesus really notices her faith in him and then does what she requests. All she wanted was a scrap, as she was seated under the table, and that’s when Jesus noticed her.

It all plays out today again... around this table. Jesus feeds us scraps of bread. Scraps of his presence... but even this meager meal is one that helps us to know our humble place before God, helps us to know of His ongoing unconditional care for us, these small scraps make the demons leave and satisfy our requests as well. It is through these scraps of bread that Jesus comes and notices us in our need.