

Christ with the Canaanite Woman and Her Daughter (1909)
Henry Ossawa Tanner

*"The woman's faith in Jesus
reminds him of the fullness and vitality of the promise
and he moves forward to fulfil that promise."*

Sunday greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

1. **LITURGY BRISBANE** currently provides the Sunday Readings for home reflection. Click on the link below for today's texts.

The first link contains the Sunday readings with associated commentaries and prayers. It is suggested that families gather to read the Scriptures aloud together:

<https://litedliturgybrisbane.weebly.com/sunday-readings-at-home.html/>

The second resource is designed for families with young children. An extract from the Sunday gospel is provided, along with several reflection questions, a family activity and a worksheet for children:

<https://litedliturgybrisbane.weebly.com/family-prayer-week-by-week.html/>



2. **REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.** We share two reflections on the Sunday scriptures our church selects for this Sunday.

The first Sunday preaching is offered by Pat McDonough who has enjoyed a thirty-five year career as a Catholic educator and school psychologist in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, NY.

Pat has written on issues of faith, family life, spirituality and human development in her column, *Family Faith*, which ran in The Long Island Catholic for eleven years. Pat has been a contributing author to The New York Times, Newsday, The National Catholic Reporter, The Catholic Digest and The American Catholic. She is a popular speaker, often bringing her experience as both a professional and a parent to providing retreats and professional days to school faculties and parishes throughout the tri-state area.



Pat is mother to three grown children, her trinity of blessings. And just when she thought life couldn't get better, she became a grandmother. Pat holds a P.D. in Psychology, M.S. in Education, M.A. in Theology and a B.S. in Criminal Justice. She completed the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius over the course of an unforgettable thirty days as a graduate student.

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/08152020>

The second reflection on the readings for today is offered by Br. Julian McDonald, an Australian Christian Brother ministering in Rome.

As for the outsiders who now follow me, working for me and loving my name... they'll be welcome to worship the same as insiders . . . Isaiah 56, 1, 6-7

Jesus said: "It's not right to take bread out of children's mouths and throw it to dogs." She was quick: "You're right, Master, but beggar dogs do get scraps from the master's table."
Matthew 15, 21-28

Today's gospel-reading clearly indicates that Jesus was truly a man of his own time and culture. It demonstrates that he was well aware of the racial and religious prejudices that were very much alive in Jewish society and in the cultures of surrounding nations. Matthew even gives the impression that Jesus was influenced by those prejudices. It matters little whether this story describes an actual event in the life of Jesus or whether it was framed by Matthew to encourage the Gentile members, especially the women, of his fledgling Christian community. It also points to the fact that Jesus, unlike so many of those around him, was sufficiently open-minded to allow his opinions to be modified by the wisdom of others, even by the wisdom of the most unlikely - a foreigner, and a woman, to boot.

This gospel-story of the Canaanite woman is an appealing one, because it relates to experiences that many of us have had. Who among us has not had to deal with the loud and persistent bleating of somebody demanding attention? And hasn't our response been something like that of the disciples: "For heaven's sake, give her what she wants. That will shut her up!"?

Moreover, we have all known what religious intolerance and sectarianism feel like. People of my generation will probably remember tensions between Catholics and Protestants in the 1940s and 1950s.



As Catholic, primary school students, we used to taunt students attending State schools with: "Catholics, Catholics ring the bell while the Publics go to hell." Youngsters who changed from Catholic to State schools were labelled by some teachers in State schools as "Weeds from the Pope's garden". As children, we were told by the Sisters and Brothers teaching us that it was a sin to stop and listen to the Salvation Army band playing in the local park on Sunday afternoons, or to accept "holy cards" from them. Religious prejudice still survives in more subtle, sophisticated forms.

Fortunately, Vatican II ushered in changes that not only led to a marked decrease in religious intolerance, but also acknowledged that God's Spirit had been present in some ways in cultures and religions throughout the history of humanity, and that God wished to embrace all people. Today's first reading from Isaiah states explicitly to the

Israelite people who had returned home from exile that God wants to include everyone: "And as for foreigners who now follow me, working for me, loving my name and wanting to be my servants - all who keep the Sabbath and hold fast to my covenant - I'll bring them to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer" (Isaiah 56, 6-7). This reading paves the way for the story of the encounter between the Canaanite woman and Jesus that is the focus of today's gospel-reading. It is important to note that this story comes immediately after an argument Jesus had had with the Pharisees when they complained about the disciples failing to wash their hands before eating. After calling the Pharisees hypocrites, Jesus announced to the crowd who had witnessed the argument: "The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and it is these that make a person unclean. For from the heart come evil intentions... These are what makes a person unclean" (Matthew 15, 18-20). In today's gospel-reading, what comes out of the mouth of the Canaanite woman comes from her heart.

The encounter that she and Jesus had was not for the faint-hearted. In confronting Jesus directly, she broke all the rules of the social etiquette of the time. Women were regarded as unreliable, so had no right to speak out. It was certainly seen as inappropriate for a woman to address a man directly, especially in public. She was a foreigner, and, as such, had no credibility. Worse still, she was a Canaanite, belonging to a nation that had the reputation of being Israel's bitterest enemy. Yet she came out fighting so vigorously and persistently that the disciples

urged Jesus to give in to her demands, just for their own peace. In her outburst, she tried to shame Jesus into doing what was



regarded as his duty to people who were foreigners. The books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy make repeated references to that duty. For example, Exodus states: "Don't abuse or take advantage of strangers; you, remember, were once strangers yourselves in Egypt" (Exodus 22, 21).

But Jesus seemed to meet fire with fire. After initially ignoring her, he went on the attack with a racially insulting slur: "It's not right to take the food of sons and daughters and throw it to dogs" (Matthew 15, 26). This response reflected the attitude of Jewish men of his time. But the Canaanite woman, refusing to be silenced, ended up besting him in

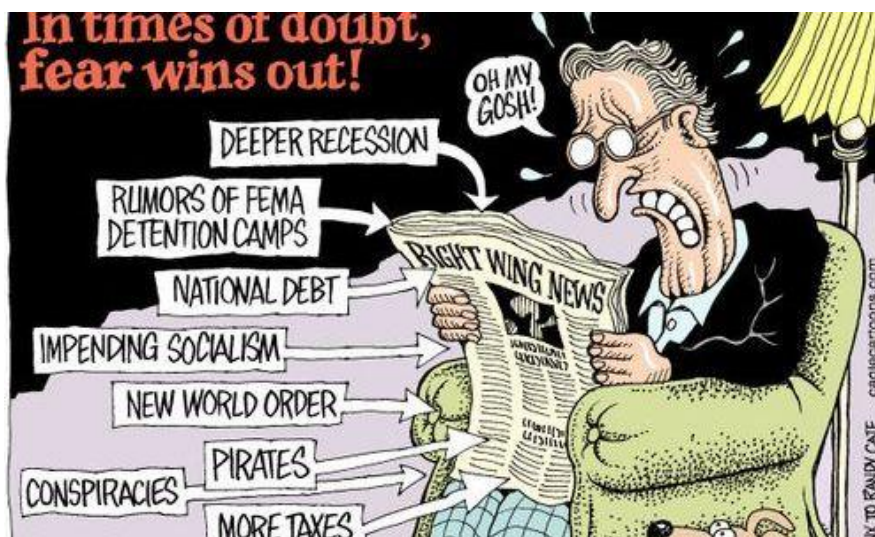
their verbal jousting. Her response came from her heart: "You're right, Master, but beggar dogs do get scraps from the master's table" (Matthew 15, 27). Jesus was humbled into submission, for he recognised in the way she had responded that her words echoed the message he had earlier given to the crowd: "The things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and they are what makes a person clean or unclean."

Effectively, the woman told Jesus that "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" were not all hearing and accepting his message, and that she would take advantage of the scraps they were dropping. That extraordinarily brave woman opened Jesus' eyes, and he came to admire her intense love for her daughter and her deep faith that he could drive away the demons that were troubling the child.

But where do we fit in all this? None of us is ignorant of the rising swell of rejection directed at the refugees of wars and conflict to which many of our countries have contributed, or have ignored by doing nothing. We are familiar with the fearmongering created by politicians whose popularity at

the ballot boxes is increased in proportion to their rhetoric about barring refugees and asylum-seekers. After all, there might be terrorists among the largest number of refugees our world has ever seen. It would be strange if there weren't. But why punish all because of a few? Today's readings prompt us to ask ourselves what kinds of bigotry or racial and religious prejudices do we harbour within our hearts.

Do we applaud the fearmongering of our political leaders as a way of rationalising ourselves into justifying a "me first" stance? Somebody once asserted that the way in which western society and our Church have dealt with the issue of child abuse would be very much better had we invited the women among us to address it. Are we as open to the voice of women as Jesus was to the voice of the Canaanite woman? I leave the final words to Pope Francis who, in a mid-flight interview from Mexico to Italy in 2016 said: "A person who thinks only of building walls - wherever they may be - is not Christian". What do I wall in and whom do I wall out? Today's readings call me to reflect on questions like these.



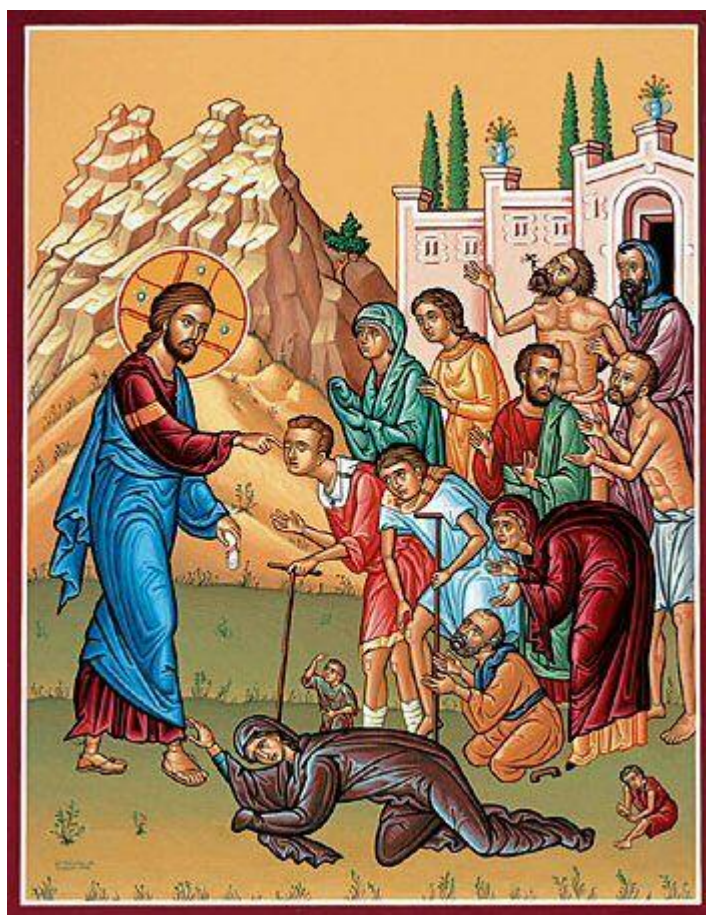
3. For those of us unable to gather for Sunday eucharist today, you may wish to prayerfully watch live-recordings of communities celebrating eucharist especially in our Cathedral of St. Stephen, Brisbane. This link takes you to the live-streaming page:

<https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/multimedia/on-demand-web-casts/>

Live-streamed daily eucharist continues at Lavender Bay, Sydney . . . prayerful and uplifting. Start time is 0730 Mon-Fri:

<https://www.northsydney Catholics.com/spirituality/liturgy/mass-on-demand>

4. We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Bill Castley, Paul White, Thyrlene Devin, Bridget Muller, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Jonathon Hancock, Marko Babic, Dermot Peters, Max Gardiner, Nicole Wimmer, Bernice Lippiatt, Pat Toohill, Trish Merlehan, Suzy Collyer, Pat Shannon, and sick members of parish families.



Jesus had compassion on them and cured their sick (Matthew 13: 14ff)

5. Yesterday we celebrated the **baptism** of Hudson Griffith, the son of Danica and Leonard, in our Boonah church. It was great to be able to welcome their respective families and friends. Let's pray that Hudson grows as a child of God and friend of Jesus.

6. We remember Patrick Manstone who died during early last week. I was able to spend time with Patrick on Sunday evening and also on Monday of last week. Patrick was the son of Elizabeth Manstone (a Boonah parishioner who died 13 years ago). Patrick's **funeral** is being celebrated at Kalbar cemetery on Monday. We extend our sympathy to his sister, Mary, her family and his friends. *May he rest in peace.*

7. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

- ♦ During last week I met with four teachers across three year levels in our parish school to begin preparation of the liturgy for their class celebrations. These are occurring over the next five weeks for each year level P-6.

It was good to sit down with them and to learn about their class, their experience of teaching this particular cohort this year as well as the characteristics of the particular children of the class.

I am constantly surprised where the conversation goes in the preparation and where we end up in terms of the intended liturgy.

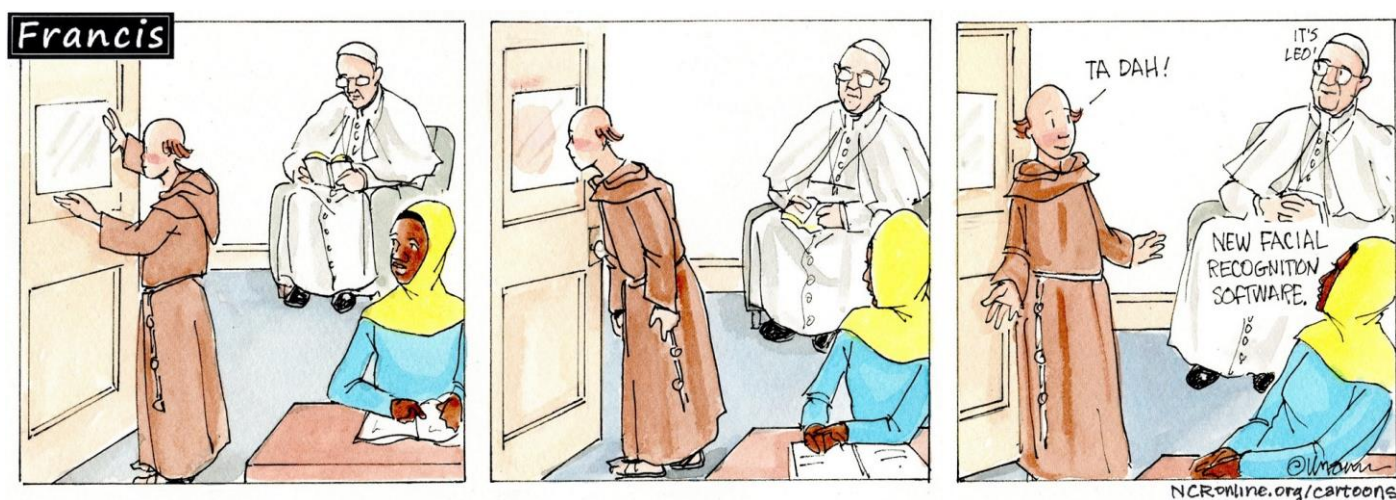
I thank the teachers for their willingness to engage in the preparation with me and also the next steps of preparing the children.

- ♦ Bishop Ken Howell is communicating directly with pastors of parishes on Thursday mornings with COVID-19 updates and the good news is that there was nothing additional to request of us.

- ♦ I also want to thank the local COVID Crews in Boonah and Harrisville who clean the churches after our celebrations. Wonderful people! We are grateful to you. The team overseeing the health requirements of our churches will meet to review what we are doing next week.

- ♦ Thanks to parishioners who are supporting the giving programme in the parish. A special thank you to those who have been able to 'catch-up' after many months of not being able to gather for Sunday eucharist. There some packs of envelopes that need to be collected now and these are at the entrance of our churches.

8. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin.



13th August 2020

9. There is a highly recommended podcast series by Archbishop Mark Coleridge. It is on St. Paul: *As we enter a change of era it is opportune to reflect on St Paul's role during a previous change of era and reflect on learnings that may help the church blaze a trail into new territory.* Thanks Archbishop Coleridge!

Episodes available now:

1. Getting to know St Paul;
2. Paul and the persecution of Christians;
3. The Road to Damascus;
4. Spreading the Good News; and
5. The disagreement at Antioch.

<https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/articles/podcast-series-on-st-paul-the-birth-of-the-church-why-the-loser-won/>



10. **THE CATHOLIC LEADER** digital edition is available free at the moment and can be sent to your inbox every Thursday morning while the pandemic is still with us. Sign up on <https://bit.ly/2ShdcSZ>. The editor and his team hopes this offer gives us all a sense of connection, inspiration and renewal in the faith, at a time when living the faith has changed.

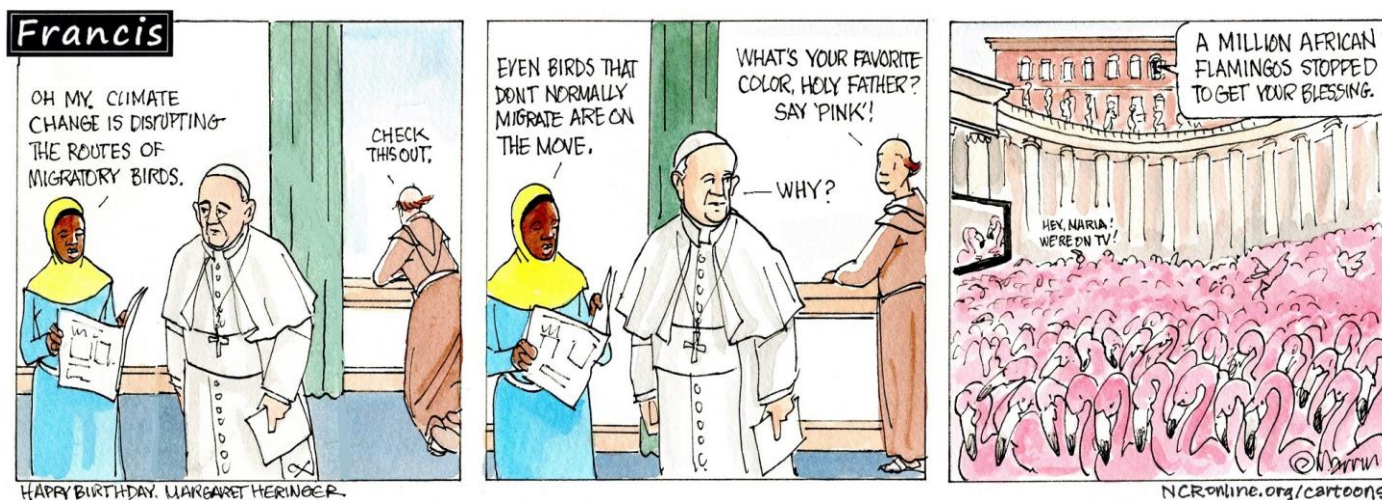
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11. **FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP** by Pat Marrin.



11th August 2020

12. You may enjoy a scholarly analysis of the gospel for this Sunday.

The writer is Diane Blanchard, it was written in 1994 and is titled: *The Gentile Woman: Engagement with Suffering*.

This is how Diane starts:

It is one thing to face pain oneself. It is another to be faced with the suffering of one's child. When our daughter, at the age of 14 months, was diagnosed as having cerebral palsy, a motor impairment condition, it seemed we had moved into another world. It was a world of hospitals, doctors, therapists, social workers and special educators. It was a world inhabited by other children who were experiencing life with impaired movement, great dependence and, sometimes, much discomfort. It was a world of parents caught in disbelief, anger, sadness and grief. We had moved into a different world but at first we wandered there as if in a thick fog, separated from others. We knew other children and their families were there but felt locked in our personal pain, unable to touch or be touched.

During the four years that have passed since our daughter's diagnosis, the fog has gradually thinned. I have met other parents and their unique children and have grieved for them and for myself. I have read books written by parents, especially mothers, telling their stories of living with chronically ill children and I have wept with them. I am suddenly sensitive to issues in the handicapped community as I think of life for my daughter beyond the protected environment of our home and I find myself studying adults with cerebral palsy, looking for models. I have met many valiant people who have engaged their suffering and have been transformed by the experience.

Here is the link: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/143688695.pdf>

(If your browser asks you if the source is ok, click yes!)

Prayer for the world at this time of pandemic

Almighty and all-merciful God,
lover of the human race, healer of all our wounds,
in whom there is no shadow of death,
save us in this time of crisis;
grant wisdom and courage to our leaders;
watch over all medical people
as they tend the sick and work for a cure;
stir in us a sense of solidarity beyond all isolation;
if our doors are closed, let our hearts be open.

By the power of your love destroy the virus of fear,
that hope may never die
and the light of Easter, the triumph of life,
may shine upon us and the whole world.

Through Jesus Christ, the Lord risen from the dead,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Holy Mary, health of the sick, *pray for us.*
St Joseph, guardian of us all, *pray for us.*

(written by Most Rev. Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Brisbane)

13. There is a free article available to all in *La Civiltà Cattolica: I Believe in the Holy Spirit* by Miguel Angel Fiorito SJ.



The beginning caught my eye:

The pastor who says, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," should ask himself some fundamental questions to discover the action of the Spirit among his faithful.

In concrete terms he will ask: "How is the Lord present in the life of my people? How do my people welcome his presence? How do my people confess the Holy Spirit?" And in that questioning he will have to keep in mind how "confessing" is not only a manifestation of a belief, but a living-it-out in that behaviour that makes a person good or bad; he will remember also that "confessing" is praying, in a prayer that alternates silence and speech, reverence and rite.

"You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you" (John 14:17). This seems a good start for catechesis on the Spirit. For if we do not resolve to adore the Spirit in the good way we live, we will end up like those fools who, when faced with a finger pointing to the moon, stare only at the finger!

La Civiltà Cattolica is a highly respected Catholic journal and the oldest journal published in Rome. Pope Pius IX gave the Jesuits this publishing project in 1850 at a time of great change in Europe.

Here is the link: https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/i-believe-in-the-holy-spirit/?utm_source=SS&utm_campaign=_SpiceSend&utm_medium=email

Have a good week!

John

pastor

Boonah Catholic community