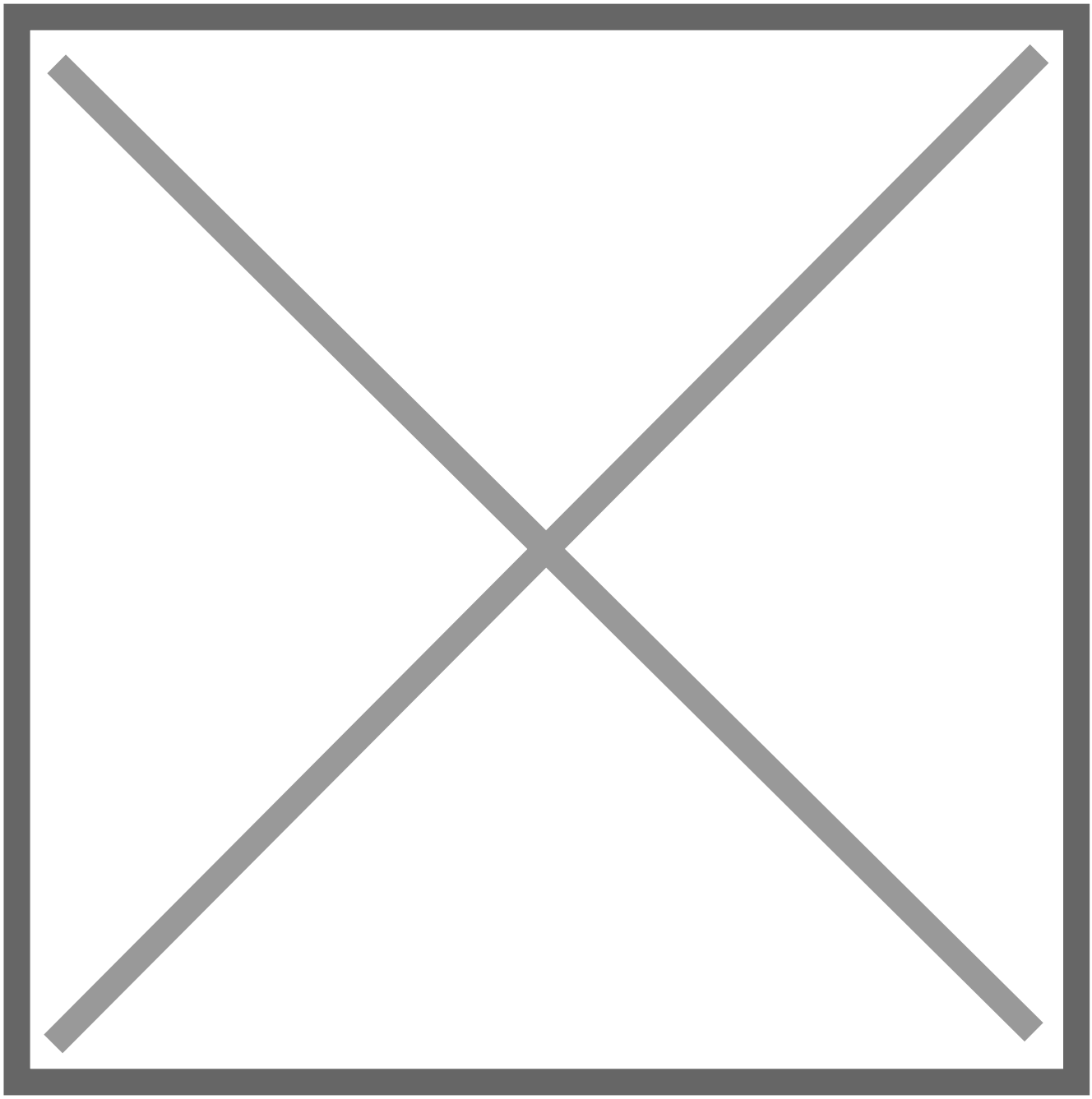
Vatican
Francis, the comic strip



The crowd in St. Peter's Square attends Pope Francis' recitation of the Angelus at the Vatican Aug. 16, 2020. The pope appealed for prayers for those who have lost their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Those who take time to understand Jesus will find he loves them and wants what is best for them, Pope Francis said.

Once people understand that Christ's heart is full of compassion and can bear people's sins, mistakes and pain, then it should be easier to find the courage "to bring our own painful story before God, before Jesus, to touch God's tenderness, Jesus' tenderness," he said Aug. 16 before reciting the Angelus with visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square.

Reflecting on the day's Gospel reading (Mt 15:21-28), the pope asked people to consider the courage and faith the pagan Canaanite woman had in begging Jesus repeatedly, despite his initial reticence, to help her daughter who was tormented by a demon.

She asks that he "have pity on me, Lord, son of David," but Jesus does not answer, and he tells his disciples his mission is directed only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and not to the pagans.

But she insists and Jesus puts her to a test, the pope said, when he said it would not be right "to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs."

But she pleads, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters," to which Jesus replies, "great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

This woman could sense Jesus was good and would respond to the needs of any of God's creatures, Francis said.

Her faith was great because she brought her personal "story," marred as it was by pain and difficulty, and placed it at the Lord's feet asking him to heal those wounds and give them meaning, he said.

Everyone has his or her own "story" and it is not always pretty, he said. "Many times it is a difficult story, with a lot of pain, many misfortunes and many sins. What do I do with my story?"

Like the Canaanite, people should not hide their stories, but should bring them to the Lord and ask him, "If you will it, you can heal me!"

The woman's story teaches people to have "the courage to bring our own painful story before God, before Jesus, to touch God's tenderness, Jesus's tenderness," he said.

People will be able to do this, the pope said, "if we understand what Christ's heart is like" — a heart that feels compassion, "that bears our pains, that bears our sins, our mistakes, our failures. But it is a heart that loves us like that, as we are, without make-up."

To understand Jesus, people need to be familiar with who he is, so they should always carry a small pocket-size Gospel or go online and read a Gospel passage every day.

"There you will find Jesus as he is," the pope said. "You will find Jesus who loves us, who loves us a lot, who tremendously wants our well-being."

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