Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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February 8, 2023
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“Let the children be fed first” (Mark 7:26).

Gn 2:18-25; *Mk 7:24-30*

Matching up today’s Genesis reading about the creation of woman with Mark’s Gospel about Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophoenician woman gives us the rare chance to say that both Adam and Jesus "met their match."

God sees that Adam is lonely, and so every creature is brought to him to be named as a possible companion. But only the woman, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, is a true partner. They reflect each other so completely that together they exhibit the full image and likeness of God.

Jesus goes to the margins of Israel and to the defined limits of his mission to the Chosen People. There he meets a pagan woman who wins her request for healing for her daughter by outwitting Jesus in an exchange of metaphors. He tells her that he cannot share the children's food with the dogs. She argues that the dogs get table scraps. In the face of such faith, Jesus can only conclude that the Spirit has brought him here to expand his ministry to the whole world. This theme fits well with the early church's thrust into the gentile world.

How appropriate it was that the Holy Spirit -- the feminine genius, co-creator and wisdom of God -- should complete Jesus' human maturity by an encounter with a brilliant, determined and challenging woman. She is also a mother, and the fiercest love possible brings her to the border to capture Jesus' attention on behalf of her endangered daughter. She will not let him go until he gives her what she wants.

If Mark's Gospel has previously challenged our notion that Jesus was all powerful by showing that his miracles needed the faith of those who received them, here we see not an all-knowing Jesus, but one who learns as he goes. He is like Adam, naming reality, altering his perceptions and the course of his mission with each fresh encounter. A very human Jesus is discovering himself as he obeys the Spirit that is driving him forward.

Grace makes all things new. Freedom creates our reality at the growing edge of every choice we make. Other people help us develop by believing in us, loving us, questioning us, winning our hearts and changing our minds. Blessed are we if we are not afraid to learn by taking risks, finding new ways to be human.

How eloquently this gospel speaks to the graces that flow at every border. How many determined women come to our national borders seeking survival and life for their children? Can we hear the movement of the Holy Spirit in their plight? Can we expand and deepen our grasp of God's way of recreating us again and again each time we open ourselves to the needs of others?

We go to God together, because this is how Jesus did it, and why he told us to follow him.