

**“Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” (Mt 15:28)**

Jesus is heading for the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon. He along with his disciples are looking for a place to get away and rest in solitude and prayer when a nameless woman shows up. The disciples tell Jesus to send her away. She doesn't let the fact that she is not an Israelite deter her, nor the fact that she is a woman, nor even the fact that the Master seems to ignore her. She is a mother, desperate for her daughter who is being "tormented by a demon." She approaches Jesus and firmly insists on a personal meeting with him. She prostrates herself before the Master and insists even more tenaciously for his help. Jesus responds: "It is not good to take food from the table and throw it to the dogs." The woman accepts the apparent refusal; she understands that her world is not part of Jesus' primary mission. She realizes that her God is not a grace-dispensing machine, but a Father who asks for honesty in the relationship with him, in which she acknowledges her spiritual poverty. Seemingly aware of that, the woman looks Jesus in the eye, and admits: "That is true, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Now she has Jesus' attention, and he is moved by her humility. The very loudness of her crying out, expresses the strength of her faith: "Lord! Son of David!"

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Her great faith is clear when she presented herself to Jesus. She approached and recognized Him as Lord. She prostrated herself before Him and asked for mercy. She remained unshaken in her conviction that even the impossible is possible for Jesus. She responded to his apparent refusal with the impeccable common sense of a mother whose strength is love and trust: "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table" (. . .) "and from that instant her daughter was healed." This Word of Life is like a photograph of a lived faith at work in a human being. It also portrays the difficult journey of the first Christian community, which the Gospel of Matthew addresses, as it begins to open itself to the non-Jewish world that seeks and already cherishes such great faith.

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Like this woman of great faith who came to Jesus in a time of need, our faith might suffer because of an unforeseen event that upsets our plans; a serious illness, or a prolonged painful situation. We could also add, the lack of peace in the world, injustices, our ailing planet, as well as family and social conflicts. One of our weak spots might be a lack of perseverance and complete trust. God allows our faith to go through difficult and sometimes absurd situations, so that it can be refined and so that we can know how to abandon ourselves to him, believing that His love is far beyond our plans, our wishes, and our expectations. This was the case with Saliba, who had to leave his elderly parents behind in his hometown of Homs, Syria. His father's glass-cutting shop had been demolished during the war. Like other young people, Saliba thought he would have to seek new opportunities elsewhere. At the age of 22 he stubbornly continued to contribute what he could to the needy people in his town. He opened a convenience store where his fellow-citizens could find cheese, yogurt, and his mother's homemade butter. He sold beans, oils, spices, and coffee. He is slowly rebuilding and already has an electrical generator and refrigerator. On the days that his shop is closed, he distributes food to needy families.