

Two lawyers are in a bank, when suddenly armed robbers burst in. While several of the robbers take the money from the tellers, others line the customers, including the lawyers, up against a wall, and proceed to take their wallets, watches, etc. While this is going on lawyer number one jams something in lawyer number two's hand. Without looking down, lawyer number two whispers, "What is this?" to which lawyer number one replies, "It's that \$50 I owe you."

Today's culture is more individualistic. We try to be comfortable by self-learning. There is no thought for the second person. We have the mentality of saying that I can handle myself. In a way, it is good. Sometimes we need this type of relationship. We need to have an inclusiveness in our lives.

The readings today illustrate the inclusiveness in our faith. The first reading from the third part of the book of Isaiah brings out that God brings salvation to the foreigners. After the Babylonian exile, not only the Jews, but also all the others came together to worship God on His mountain. They will be brought into the saving relationship with God.

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds his Gentiles audience that just as they once were disobedient, but have received the mercy of God. Thus, both Jews and the gentiles accepted Jesus as Messiah now. That is the inclusiveness of God's mercy.

Today's gospel clearly tells that Jesus recognized the faith of the Canaanite woman. The word that was used in the gospel does not talk about the street dog. But it means the pets at home. It becomes the part of the family. However, the animal is a part of our family but does not dine at our table with us. Pets are not outsiders but insiders. They not only belong to the family, but are part of the family. While they do not have a seat at the table, they enjoy intimacy at the family's feet!

Jesus was amazed by the Canaanite woman's faith. That's why Jesus included her into the faith and did heal her. God never exclude any one. God does not discriminate but welcomes all who believe in Him, who ask for His mercy and who try to do His will. He has no boundary. He works beyond any human boundaries.

The four things that need to be appreciated in that woman are her love to her child, strong faith, persistence in asking, not bothering about the discouragement. She changed the discouragement into positive energy and proved her faith and proved God's magnificence of including all in one faith.

There was a saying that goes this way: "Prayer is the weakness of God and the strength of human beings." The truth is, God has no weakness. But once we pray to Him from our hearts and what we ask of Him concerns not only ourselves but others as well, He would

not turn a deaf ear to us. That is why Jesus gives in to the demand of this Canaanite woman because of her faith and persistent prayer in Him. Jesus says: "O woman, great is your faith!" Let it be done for you as you wish, (v. 28) and the woman gets what she wants because she is persistent, she does not give in; she is not discouraged. Therefore, we must pray much, pray well, pray always and pray on.

One more thing for reflection about refugees and immigrants. God never discriminate anyone. He never hates anyone on any basis. Let us also include everyone in faith. As we appreciate the faith of the Canaanite woman, she received the recognition of Jesus. Only the two gentile's miracles are given in the Gospel. God makes people, we make labels by religion, race or culture. Let us also respect and include every human being without our own labels.

The matter of how to treat people who are not "One of our own" — immigrants or those racially different — is present in our news cycle. Historically, this issue alone is still causing controversies within the church and in countries around the world as well. Who is to be accepted? Who is to be rejected? Who is to be relegated to the back of the bus?

Pope Francis says, "Let us include everyone as God's creation. Let us try to include in relationship with everyone."