

SUNDAY PLUS

Have faith!

Have faith!



By Paul Higginson

We aren't used to seeing someone "get the better of" Jesus in the cut and thrust of verbal debate; but the Canaanite woman in today's Gospel is not out to trap or embarrass Jesus – she is fighting for her daughter's life. And it is her faith that moves Jesus to eventually give her what she wants.

This faith is not to be confused with "belief". We can believe in God but have little faith. Faith is not an idea or a way of thinking – it is an attitude of trusting, of knowing that in our relationship with

God, we will be loved and taken care of. Faith opens doors which scepticism closes. It leads to hope and joy, and without it, life loses colour and excitement. Jesus knew this when he said, "Everything is possible for anyone who has faith".

The Canaanite woman was a pagan. Her belief system was not aligned with the teachings of the house of Israel, in fact she was regarded as an idolator and ritually unclean. Yet for Jesus, religion is not necessarily about believing in something, but trusting someone. The woman is

saying, in effect, "I trust you, Jesus, to look after me and my daughter", and her faith is rewarded.

It's easy to believe stuff, but having faith and trusting God involves courage and commitment, and sometimes personal sacrifice and risk (especially in times of trouble). We love to map out the future, to be in control, but Jesus just says, "Trust in me. Have faith!"

Paul Higginson is a retired teacher, and author of Doing Christianity: How religion is about what you do, not what you believe.

Faith is not alienation or a crooked deal, but a path of beauty and truth marked out by Jesus to prepare our eyes to gaze without glasses at "the marvellous face of God".

Pope Francis

Trust God

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

"Sister, you have worked magic!" I hadn't, but until then, Mwenga had never seen a pocket calculator and couldn't know that it would transform his accountancy work.

Jesus could have saved a great deal of time and energy if he'd used antibiotics, cataract surgery and medication which could control epilepsy and many other diseases which affected the people who came to him. Instead, he worked within the beliefs and culture of his time.

When a woman begged Jesus to heal her daughter whom she

believed to be possessed by the devil, did the girl have a mental illness which could have been controlled by today's drugs? We can never know.

Jesus praised the mother's faith. She'd done what any parent would do: had tried everything in her power to help her daughter. We face different challenges. As Dutch resistance heroine and writer Corrie Ten Boom declared, "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

Feast of the week
Saturday 26 August


Bl. Dominic Barberi (1792-1849)

A great-uncle of Sir Winston Churchill, a great-great-great uncle of Princess Diana, and hence related to Princes William and Harry, was responsible for bringing an outstanding Passionist, Bl. Dominic Barberi to Britain. In fact, Ven. Ignatius Spencer is on his own road to canonisation, independently of the priest who would receive St John Henry Newman into the Church and eventually die suddenly on the platform at Reading Station on 27 August 1849.

Dominic Barberi, an Italian, was convinced of his missionary vocation to work in England and was overjoyed to be sent here at Ignatius Spencer's request. His enthusiastic preaching attracted huge crowds of both Catholics and non-Catholics to his missions, among them Newman, who subsequently became a Catholic.

Post-Reformation Catholics were gradually increasing in confidence and emancipation when Barberi landed in Britain. In 1844, he organised the first outdoor procession in honour of the Blessed Sacrament since the Reformation, encouraging Catholics to be bolder in proclaiming their faith, even in a potentially hostile environment.

Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

Lord, thank you so much for my faith. Preserve my faith, increase it. May my faith be strong and courageous. And help me in the moments when I must make it public.  Amen.

Today:
Isaiah 56:1, 6-7
Romans 11:13-15, 29-32
Matthew 15:21-28

Monday:
Judges 2:11-19
Matthew 19:16-22

Tuesday:
Judges 6:11-24
Matthew 19:23-30

Wednesday:
Judges 9:6-15
Matthew 20:1-16

Thursday:
Apocalypse 21:9-14
John 1:45-51

Friday:
Ruth 1:1, 3-6, 14-16, 22
Matthew 22:34-40

Saturday:
Ruth 2:1-3, 8-11; 4:13-17
Matthew 23:1-12

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 22:19-23
Romans 11:33-36
Matthew 16:13-20