



Cherish All Children

Pray + Educate + Connect + Act

Wednesday Prayer

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

...but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." Mark 7:25-29

This woman – an outsider, considered impure as a Gentile, unaccompanied by a husband or male relative, with a daughter possessed by a demon – this woman approaches Jesus. And his response, whether due to human fatigue, or whether a reply to test her faith, is not expected. We may struggle with what Jesus meant by this, but this woman, she doesn't miss a beat. She doesn't accept that Jesus may be excluding her and her daughter as outsiders ("the dogs") but instead replies that all are welcome to God's love and healing power, even by means of the crumbs. What tenacity. What faith.

In the book *Renting Lacy, A Story of America's Prostituted Children*, one chapter talks about the tenacity required for girls (and boys) to survive "the life." And this helps us to understand why they don't leave, and to have compassion. Those who work directly with victims may describe them initially as tough, crude, angry, violent, and/or living a fantasy. Author Linda Smith goes on to say, "But all of this is *what has kept them alive*."

The woman who approached Jesus had nothing to lose, and everything to lose. The young people who are captivated and coerced by a trafficker often feel they have nothing to lose. Yet they have everything to lose. When we see an angry, tough, or even violent young person, what is our reaction? Do we remember that **all** are God's beloved children? They just may be crying out for us to see this in them, and accept them. Jesus continuously shows us the vulnerable and marginalized are precisely who we are called to love.

Dear God, help us to have the faith of the woman begging for healing, and the tenacity to work tirelessly to support young people. Be with those who are trapped, that they may find safety, healing, and welcome in communities of faith. Amen.

Today's Wednesday Prayer was written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.