



WEEKLY THOUGHTS - MARCH 13, 2020

Dearly Beloved,

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Fourth Sunday of Great Lent- Canaanite Woman (Mathew 15: 21-26)

Christ has come to this world to save the whole creation. His birth announcement was done by the Angel saying “I am bringing good news to the *whole world*.” (Luke 2:10). Here in this text it has been revealed that Christ saves people irrespective of their religion and faith. Canaanite woman is from outside Judaism. No religious exclusivist attitude would work with Christ. His mercy and compassion surpasses all barriers.

Silence of the Lord may have a catechetical (educational) purpose. Even after submitting requests, the woman hasn't received any answer or positive response from Him. Why? It becomes clear that Jesus had intended to teach the society and the Jewish people about God's compassion which flows out to every human, no matter what faith and tradition they carry. The discourse occurred between Jesus and the woman is meant for all. People of religion would have a claim that their tradition and faith are the best and inerrant, for them, God considers only those who follow a particular pattern of practicing of faith, and if people don't get into their practice, they would have no blessings from God. How we interpret our faith matters to us alone. Faith itself is more important. Faith in God is the saving part. We cannot ask, 'which God?'. There is only one God, but many expressions. Which expression we follow would be depending upon our culture. Whichever manifestation we adhere to, faith is only what works. It has been made clear by the Lord saying to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” (Mt 15:28) If there is something that works over faith, it would be God's Grace. (Ephesians 2:8) 'For it is by Grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.'

The current COVID 19 alerts and Safety /Security measures point to the need of bringing together faith and Grace which the world has been keeping aside for years. Humans had a lot of trust in technological advancements, facilities, financial security, health coverage, economical progress and liberal policies. Secularism has grown to a level where professing or admitting of spiritual faith has become a reason for legal proceedings and getting convicted for violating the state law. Now the whole world need to think and rethink where we failed and what takes us to situation which goes beyond control. Because humans wanted to live a free life without having any feeling of guilt, we had taken away 'God and Faith aspects' from our day-to-day governing. If the existence of God can be ruled out, there would need no worry about exploiting, bribing, invading, encroaching, waging war and doing injustice to each other. We called it progress. Now it's time for everyone to think whether we have been living right and we have missed out something which the creation of God never had to.

COVID 19 Safety Measures implemented by our Parish

Considering the Kalpana issued from Catholicate Office, guidance from Diocesan Office and Ontario Health alert, we have decided to implement the following safety measures:



1) Postponement:

a) **Parish General body** scheduled to be conducted on Sunday 15 March 2020 has been postponed. Next date shall be updated. We would have the same eligibility list for the meeting.

b) **OVBS 2020** scheduled to be conducted during March Break Wednesday 18 to Saturday 21 has been postponed. Next date shall be announced soon.

2) Cancellation: Sunday School, Area Prayer, Lenten House Prayer, Friday Retreat, Meetings of Organisations and *any gatherings other than Holy Qurbana* have been cancelled. Holy Confession would be suspended for the time being.

3) Holy Qurbana: Holy Qurbana shall be conducted on Sundays and other Feast Days until the end of March.

* **Sunday 15 March- Holy Qurbana** would begin at **09:30am** with **Holy Scriptural** reading from **Old Testament**.

***Morning prayer** shall be done by **Altar Servers** within the Sanctuary. ***Parish Members** are **not expected to attend Morning Prayer** to avoid long staying within the Church.

***Absolution** shall be done with a **common prayer and no laying of hand** on head be done.

*For those who wish to take **Holy Communion** would need to be **present since the beginning of Holy Qurbana**.

*For Holy Communion, **water shall be served in tiny disposable cups** and they shall be collected in a bag kept on floor.

***No Kiss of Peace** exchanging through hands but through bowing to each other.

***No food, snacks, drinks** shall be served at church.

4) Sanitizer: While entering the church, please remember to **use hand sanitizer** kept on the walls down the steps.

5) Beware: Anyone **feeling cold, running nose, cough, sneeze, please stay home. Travelled from long distance**, please remain home for the time.

Don't we have faith in God? Why we cancel, postpone and do precautions?

These arrangements have been done not because we lack faith in God but because we would need to avoid further spreading of this Pandemic. We need to rule out any chances of getting infected from the church gathering, to avoid any possibility of closing down of the church and to keep our parish



community from conveying virus. We wish to assure the Government full cooperation, support and solidarity.

Would this affect our practicing of faith especially during Great Lent?

In no way. Rather this would give us opportunity to practice our faith at home because most of the family members would be at home. We can have 40 kneeling down at home. If we don't have Lenten prayer book, just make the Kauma Prayer, Nicene Creed and then praying Kurielaison 40 times with kneeling down for each. Please make family Bible Reading and discussing on the text daily. Please get into spiritual discussions with children and grandchildren. If you feel that what you have discussed would be worth sharing, you could do it when we have parish gatherings. If you have doubts or questions left unsolved, please feel free to share with your Vicar. We would find a platform to discuss them further.

It's gonna be a Revival of Family Life, say Cheese without posing for photos!

Please be positive about this self quarantine period. Please find it as a God-given opportunity to celebrate the blessings of living a family. Find time for family cooking by involving children whatever age they are. Let them grate, cut vegetables (unfortunately no meat, fish possible due to Lent!), mix masala, fry, cook, make juice cocktail... you know better than me anyway! Also make time for reading. When we have stopped that habit?! Let us also raise our face from bending down to look unto Whatsapp and other chats and look at each other's faces and eyes. When was the last time we looked into the eyes of our beloved ones?! Spoken to them without haste? May be I am wrong. If not, please find it as the one and only opportunity we get in a life time to be with our family!

This would affect our Parish revenue. How could we support the Parish in its daily running?

We would need money to run the Church. Payment of bills, daily needs and repayment of mortgage would require support. We could now support by:

*Paying \$100/- towards donation for Holy Week. Please make it now.

*Paying of Arrears if any.

*Paying monthly subscription and dues at the earliest.

*Any voluntary donation would be highly appreciable

Mid-Lent Liturgy: 06:30 pm, Tuesday 17 March

Holy Liturgy of Mid Lent shall be celebrated on Tuesday 17 March 2020 in the evening with Holy Qurbana starting at 06:30pm. Please assure participation.

Regarding the restrictions as part of safety measures, It's going to be like putting a curtain for a short period to be unveiled. This situation would pass. The break we take now would give us more enthusiasm and dedication. After a self induced untouchability for the sake of everyone's good



ST. GREGORIOS ORTHODOX CHURCH OF TORONTO

(Since 1969)

6890 Professional court, Mississauga, Ontario, L4V 1X6, Canada



health, we would come back to each other to hug, to exchange kiss of peace and to give handshake with a renewed spirit and increased love. May God keep the whole world under His parental care. May we all keep each other in prayer. May we have Divine guarding from all anxieties. Our Lord is Gracious and Merciful.

See you on Sunday

Holding you in prayer

Love in Christ

Yours

Thomas John Achen