

Thursday 13 February

Today is Thursday 13 February, in the fifth week of Ordinary time.

The University of Johannesburg choir conducted by Renette Bouwer sing the Kyrie: Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy. These imploring words, which have been sung for centuries, are a reminder of the inexhaustible mercy of God, of God's unfailing compassion and forgiveness. As I listen, I might think for a moment about my need for that forgiveness, and the need, too, for me to show that same forgiveness to others.

Today's reading is from the Gospel of Mark.

What's your first reaction when you hear this story of the Syrophenician woman and Jesus? Does Jesus seem a bit harsh in what he says at first to her, as if he is comparing her people to dogs? Does she seem a bit cheeky in the way she takes him on? Or do you admire her wit and her pluck?

And what about the outcome? It seems that this woman is rewarded for her retort, for not accepting what seemed like a brush-off. Jesus ? who we rarely see concede an argument to anyone ? concedes to her and heals her daughter. Does that surprise you? Impress you?

As you listen to the reading again, imagine yourself as the woman, having the nerve, the cheek perhaps, to speak like this with Jesus. Notice how you feel in the role of this woman, during and after this remarkable exchange.

Have that same nerve, that same cheek now, and speak frankly to the Lord in these last moments of the prayer time. Tell him what you really think, what you really feel, what you really want from him.