

BEING INCLUSIVE LIKE JESUS: 20TH SUNDAY YEAR A

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The Canaanite woman answered Jesus back. *'Even house-dogs,'* she snapped, *'can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table.'*

An English Jesuit called Paul O'Reilly is trained as both a priest and a medical doctor. He has written about something that happened to him as a priest-doctor in South America. He went out on a medical patrol to a remote village. He and his team finished early. So his team suggested: *'Let's go over to the next village. They're having a Sports Day.'* On arrival, he settled down with the others to watch a game of soccer and to sip on a small glass of beer. It was all very pleasant and peaceful.

Then a local woman came up to him and said: *'I know who you are – you're the doctor at the hospital in Lethem.'* *'Yes,'* he said, *'that's right.'* She said: *'we've got a sick baby here and we need you to look at it.'* So Paul got up, walked over to the house, and saw the sick baby who wasn't all that sick, and gave him some medicines to try to make him a little better.' Next, thinking he had done a good job, he went back to watch the soccer and finish his glass of beer.

And then the same woman said: *'Aren't you also the priest at St So-and-So's?'* He answered: *'Well, actually, yes I am.'* And so she asked: *'Why don't you come and hold service here?'* He said, *'because there aren't any Catholics here.'* But she said: *'Yes there is – there is a Catholic family here.'* So to prove it she went off and found a woman and stood her up in front of Paul and badgered her until she admitted that yes, she was a Catholic – hadn't been to church for a long time, but she had been baptised a Catholic.

By now, there were quite a few people standing around and they all proclaimed triumphantly: *'There, you see, there is a Catholic here. So will you come and hold church for us?'* So Paul said, *'yes, certainly I will, but if you're not Catholics, why do you want so much to come to the Catholic Mass?'* They replied: *'Well, we are members of such-and-such another church (it would be unfair to give the name) but our pastor hardly ever comes here. Will you please hold church for us? Please?! Oh Please?!!!'*

In his mind Paul was thinking: *'Oh no! I just know I am going to get into big trouble for this. I am sent only to the lost sheep of the Catholic Church and now*

all these other sheep are trying to get in as well. But, as the T-shirt says, "what would Jesus do?" He simply could not say 'no' to the Indian woman, any more than Jesus could say 'no' to the Canaanite woman who begged him on her knees for any scraps of the bread of life that fell from his table. He just knew that Jesus would have said to this Indian woman too: *'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.'*

Fr Paul finishes his story with this plea: *'But if my bishop ever asks what happened, just tell him I was there for the Sports Day and a glass of beer!'*