

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

MT 15:21-28

Antoni Gaudí is one of the great architects of history. He was born in Spain on June 25th, 1852 and became famous for his unique buildings and architectural designs. They are recognized internationally and are admired by millions today. Between 1984 and 2005, UNESCO named seven of his works as World Heritage Sites.

Most of you have probably heard of Gaudí's masterpiece, the Basilica of *La Sagrada Família*, in Barcelona. Gaudí began working on this magnificent basilica in 1883 and dedicated 43 years of his life constructing it until his death in 1926. Ninety-one years later it is still incomplete, but *La Sagrada Família* has become the most visited monument in Spain.

Gaudí was a man of faith. He attended Mass daily and went to confession on a regular basis. He stated that he designed and built all his work for the glory of God. His faith intensified during his life and he included religious images in many of his works. This earned him the nickname "God's Architect" and some people are currently pushing for the Church to make him a Saint. Death is required for sainthood, in the sense that individuals can't be officially named saints by the Church until after

their death. Gaudí had many saintly qualities, but sadly, the story about his death is not a beautiful story.

In the last years of his life, Gaudí lived a simple life of prayer and fasting, in addition to working on *La Sagrada Familia*. He always wore shabby clothing. On June 7th, 1926, Gaudi was taking his daily walk to the church of St. Phillip Neri in Barcelona for his usual time of prayer and confession. While he was walking along the street, a tram was passing by and struck him, eventually causing him to lose consciousness. Due to Gaudí's unkempt appearance, most people who witnessed the accident thought he was homeless and ignored him. A few people tried to bring him to a hospital, but taxi drivers wouldn't bother taking a beggar to the hospital. A police officer eventually brought him to a hospital, but by the time someone recognized the famous architect, his condition was past the point of no return. Gaudí died three days later, on June 10th, 1926.

What makes this story so sad was not that people treated a great architect like this so carelessly, rather the people's carelessness of their brother in Christ was what made Gaudí's death so tragic.

In today's gospel, a Canaanite woman came to Jesus and called out to Him, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David." Upon hearing this woman's plea, Jesus' apostles asked Him to "send her away." The Canaanites were no friends of the Jews and were often hostile to them. The Jews forbade intermarriage with the Canaanites. Therefore, for the disciples, it was the right and just thing to ask Jesus, "Send her away. She is not one of us. She is not our people." However, whatever or whoever the Canaanites represented to the Jews, even a religious threat, the Lord Jesus responded favorably to her, seeing something in her that the Twelve Apostles could not see.

In the Fourth Century, an Egyptian monk Abba Poemen said,

'We are in such trouble because we are not taking care of our brother who the Scripture stipulated we are to take in. Or do we not see the Canaanite woman who followed the Savior, crying and beseeching for her daughter to be healed – and that the Savior looked with favor on her and healed [her daughter]?'"

Today, how many people around us are still calling out “Have pity on me, Lord!” How many of our brothers and sisters are begging God for His loving care.

The refugees, the immigrants, the homeless, the poor and others who are suffering in various ways. They are all children of God. They are our brothers and sisters, and we are all called to care for our brothers and sisters.

So my friends, as we continue to live out the Good News of the Gospel, let us ask ourselves;

Do we really treat these people as our brothers and sisters? or

Do we ask Jesus to send them away?