

- 1) It is a phrase,
 - a) Which I have heard a lot over the past few days.
 - b) “Didyasee?”
 - i) “Didyasee the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics?”
 - ii) “Didyasee how exciting they were?”
 - iii) “Didyasee how amazing they were?”
 - iv) “did ya see how all the teams came walking into the stadium, people from all over the world? Didyasee?”
 - c) And probably most of us did. The opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics were the most watched in the history of the games.
 - d) I sat for hours
 - e) Transfixed by the beauty,
 - f) But also mesmerized by the clarity
 - i) Of the message those opening ceremonies were meant to convey:
 - ii) Summed up in the motto for the games: One world one dream.
 - iii) China was opening her doors to the world and all were welcome!
- 2) It is a dream that any of us could share.
 - a) the people of Judah certainly did.
 - i) For at the time the words of today’s first reading were spoken,
 - ii) The people of Judah, of Jerusalem, God’s people,
 - (1) Conquered in war and exiled in far-off Babylon,
 - iii) Had been given the permission to do something
 - (1) Which only a few years before would have been unthinkable;
 - iv) To return to their Promised Land.
 - (1) Prophets promised that the journey home would be exciting!
 - (2) Prophets promised that the Promised Land would be amazing!
 - (3) Prophets such as the one who spoke the words in today’s first reading promised that people would come, not just from Babylon, but from all over the world;
 - (4) They would join themselves to the people of Judah,
 - (5) They would stream into God’s Temple
 - (a) Which would be a house for all people to pray in.
 - (6) The reading today practically cries out to us: “Jerusalem is opening its doors to the world and all are welcome! One World! One dream!”
- 3) Such beautiful dreams are so convincing;
- 4) They make us want to believe that there is a place
 - a) Where all are welcome. China wants us to believe it is such a place.
 - b) Except of course for Joey Cheek;
 - i) He was the athlete who was going to Beijing
 - ii) To protest China’s support of the genocide in Darfur.
 - iii) His visa was denied. He was not welcome.
 - c) Or little Yang Peiyi;
 - i) She was that little girl who sang the beautiful “Ode to the Motherland” in Beijing on opening night.

- ii) Her voice was certainly welcome;
 - (1) But her less than perfect face with less than perfect teeth were not.
 - (2) And another little girl, Lin Miaoke was asked to lip - synch her words.
- d) Or all the other people who would protest China's politics, petition for more freedom, or simply publish criticisms of China on the Internet.
 - i) All were blocked, ignored, rejected.
 - ii) None were welcome.
- 5) As the coverage of the Beijing Games has continued,
 - a) it has become common to say that China's lack of democratic freedoms are the cause of all this;
 - i) And that if they were only like us,
 - ii) Well then their doors would truly be open;
 - iii) And they would realize their beautiful dream.
 - b) But whom are we kidding?
 - i) We are a land where foreigners are regularly discriminated against
 - ii) Where walls and vigilantes are used to keep the Mexicans out
 - iii) And even Canadians need a visa to visit.
 - c) Despite the fact that our nation was built by the beautiful dream of people streaming in from all the nations of the world hoping to find liberty.
 - d) The reality in our case is also far less than the dream.
- 6) It always is. It is for us in our day, and it was for the people of Judah in Jesus' day.
 - a) For they are the descendants of those first people who believed the words in today's first reading and returned to the Promised Land.
 - b) It was the Promised Land all right; but what a disappointing promise.
 - c) They returned to a ruined city in a desolate land.
 - d) As a result they were forced to rebuild;
 - i) And they built a land with walls like any other,
 - e) Some of those walls were made of bricks and mortar.
 - f) But there were others; and we see *them*
 - i) When Jesus says to the Canaanite woman, pleading for help for her possessed daughter in today's Gospel, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and
 - ii) "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dog's."
- 7) These sentiments would have been absolutely familiar to the people in Matthew's congregation; and let's face it they are to us as well.
 - a) For it was as common for people in Matthew's Church to believe that Jesus had been sent to them, was meant for them, and thus belonged to them,
 - b) As it is for us to believe that because we are Catholic, with masses at our altars and tabernacles in our churches, that Jesus belongs to us.
- 8) And if that woman, after hearing those sentiments had just left, well then those sentiments would be affirmed.
- 9) But she does not; she uses her brains and her wit and challenges Jesus' parroting the prejudices of his people;

- a) And Jesus, proclaiming her great faith performs a miracle on the spot for her, healing her possessed daughter.
- 10) This story might not mean that much to us; but it should
 - a) for it did to Matthew's Church back then.
 - b) For to say that this Canaanite; this Gentile, this woman with a demon possessed daughter
 - i) was deserving of all the benefits of someone who belonged to God's people
 - c) would be as shocking as it would be for us to say
 - d) . . . that anyone coming through that door was as deserving of all the sacraments, all the graces, all the benefits we are, because we belong to the Catholic Church.
- 11) And for the same reason; for in proclaiming that this Canaanite woman was just as welcome as anyone else; Jesus was breaking down those walls, destroying those barriers, and renewing the promise made in the first reading.
- 12) With one difference.
 - a) For Jesus that place with open doors where all are welcome,
 - b) That place where people stream in from all the nations of the world
 - c) That place which becomes a house of prayer for all people
 - d) That place where the dream hoped for in these Olympics becomes a reality
 - e) Isn't a place. It is a moment.
 - i) That moment when we recognize in a stranger that desire to belong
 - ii) That moment when we invite them to come and see.
 - iii) It is that moment when all of us gather like we do here
 - iv) From different nations and cultures
 - v) And we share our doubts and concerns, our joys and our hopes
 - vi) Around this one altar
 - vii) And we become a house of prayer
 - (1) for anyone;
 - (2) for everyone
 - (3) a house of prayer for all peoples.
 - f) But just like in the Gospel, it is a moment that has effects;
 - (1) It effects the way we treat people at work
 - (2) As well as the way we treat our family at home
 - (3) It effects the way we think
 - (4) And it effects the way we vote.
 - (5) OR at least it should – how can it not?
 - (6) Because here in this place we glimpse the promise of one world and one dream made real
 - (a) Not in a stadium in China but in a Church right here on the Lower East side. Where the doors are open and all are welcome.
 - (b) . . . Or at least they should be. But then that part is up to us.