**20th Sunday in Ordinary Timre.**



**1st Reading: Isaiah 56:1. 6-7**

Thus says the Lord: Have a care for justice, act with integrity, for soon my salvation will come and my integrity be manifest.

Foreigners who have attached themselves to Yahweh to serve him and to love his name and be his servants —  
all who observe the sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to my covenant — these I will bring to my holy mountain.  
I will make them joyful in my house of prayer.  
Their holocausts and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar,  
for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

**Responsorial: Psalm 66:2-3, 5-6, 8**

**Response: *O God, let all the nations praise you!***

**O God, be gracious and bless us  
and let your face shed its light upon us.  
So will your ways be known upon earth  
and all nations learn your saving help. *Resp:*

Let the nations be glad and exult  
for you rule the world with justice.  
With fairness you rule the peoples,  
you guide the nations on earth. *Resp:*

Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you.  
May God still give us his blessing  
till the ends of the earth revere him. *Resp:*

**2nd Reading: Romans 11:13ff**

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry in order to make my own people jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead! for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient so that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

**Gospel Acclamation:**

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Jesus preached the Good News of the kingdom

And healed all who were sick.

Alleluia!

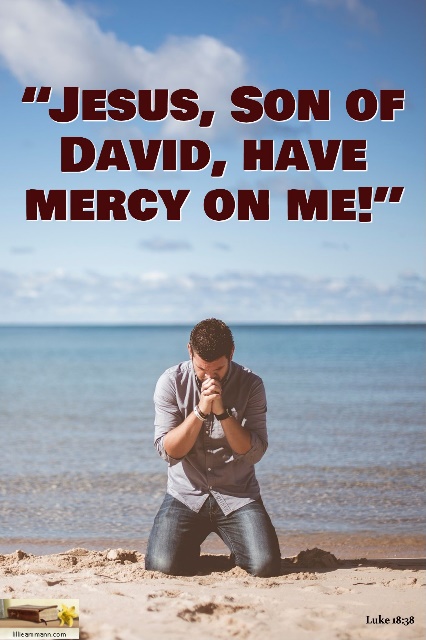
**Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28**

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**Jesus answers the prayer of a persistent woman and praises her faith**

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon. ” But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us. ” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me. ” He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs. ” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table. ” Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish. ” And her daughter was healed instantly.

**REFLECTIONS:**



1. **Not a church of pigeonholes:** For office filing purposes pigeonholes are splendid. Bureaucrats love tidy compartments where accounts, applications, drafts etc. can be systematically stored — everything in its proper place. A good office motto might be: No surprises and no disorder! There’s a temptation to think of God’s grace as parcelled out in a similarly neat, orderly way — as something reserved for the God-fearing elect, the People of God. Historically, many of our Jewish forebears adopted this view, and they (and we!) require the universalist message of Isaiah: God wants a house of prayer open to all the nations. Christians need to remember it too: God wills ALL human beings to be saved; in the Father’s house there are many rooms.

2. **Blessings of Loss:** Our heavenly Father draws people towards Himself in strange, unpredictable ways. Just as in a family the misfortune of one member can serve to unite the others in a new, protective loyalty; or as in business the failure of one concern can direct energy into a new, more productive line… so the rejection of Our Saviour by the Jews resulted in His more rapid acceptance throughout the Gentile world. It’s an ill wind blows good to nobody! Even the lapses and sins of mankind can be turned to good account, says Paul in a profound but difficult section of his letter to the Romans: “God has imprisoned all men in disobedience only to show mercy on all.” Our own past sins will not bar us from Christ-they only show us how much we need him (“To seek and save what was lost.”)

3. **Crumbs in the Kitchen:** Why does Jesus want to limit himself to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel?” Was he not concerned for people of other nations, like that foreign woman with the loud voice, who pleaded for his help? She didn’t give up; that’s the first thing. Second, she found the perfect answer: “Even the pups get the crumbs that fall from the master’s table!” Thirdly, her prayer was answered, and her faith warmly praised. But still, what do we make of the initial remark? A popular idiom in Israel, used by Jesus to convey that his primary mission was the conversion of his own Jewish people? Historically, that was his way; first to revive the Chosen People, so that these in turn would furnish a “house of prayer for all nations.” However, even during his lifetime He was willing to receive those pagans who came to him; and he predicted that in future “many will come from East and West, and will sit down at table in the Kingdom of God.” Notice too the world-wide mission of the disciples, after the Resurrection (Mat. 28:18.)

4. **Expanding circles:** That’s how Christian faith should spread, like the rippling circles expanding on the surface when a stone drops into a still pond. First to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. Always handed on by direct contact, the sharing of trust, the witness of peaceful conviction, the bearing of one another’s burdens. But will our path of faith be smooth? Or will there be setbacks and obstacles, objections from people more clever than ourselves, a contrary wind of current opinion hostile to religious belief? In such circumstances, the Canaanite woman offers inspiration, with her iron resolve coupled with good humour and ready wit.

5. **The Mercy of God:**

