

*We Respond*

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**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) Turn your eyes, O God, our shield; and look on the face of your anointed one; one day within your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 66)

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

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

**LECTOR:** 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. **R.**

**LECTOR:** 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. **R.**

**LECTOR:** 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. **R.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! Jesus preached the Good News of the kingdom and healed all who were sick. Alleluia!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) With the Lord there is mercy; in him is plentiful redemption.

Or

I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever.

**TODAY'S READINGS** Isaiah 56:1, 6-7; Romans 11:13-15, 29-32; Matthew 15:21-28.

**NEXT WEEK** (21st Sunday of Year A) Is 22:19-23; Ps 137; Rom 11:33-36; Mt 16:13-20.

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*God's  
generous love  
for us all*



**16 August 2020 20th Sunday Year A**

It comes as rather a shock in today's reading when Jesus seems rather callously to rebuff a woman who desperately implores his help. Her daughter is very ill; the mother pleads for her healing. But the woman is a Canaanite; she is not a Jew, not one of the chosen people of Israel.

Does she, an outsider, a foreigner, even have a right to ask for his help? At first Jesus ignores her. Then, when she kneels and begs him again, his replies rather coldly, telling her that "It is not right to take the food of the children (i.e. the people of Israel) and throw it to the dogs (i.e., the Gentiles, the non-Jews)." But she, undeterred, pleads again, this time cleverly turning his argument against him, saying "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters."

At this point, after three times rebuffing her, he relents. Indeed, he changes. She's penetrated his thinking and prompted him to a new understanding and he has changed his mind! He gets the point. The point is that his mission is not just to the People of Israel. It is for everyone! Now, he commends her for her remarkable faith: "O woman, great is your faith!" and he yields to her plea. Her daughter is healed from that moment.

It is this same amazing reality of God's generous, steadfast and inclusive love of all, which the Canaanite woman so insistently

and effectively forced to Jesus' realisation, that today's readings from Isaiah and from Paul's Letter to the Romans also attest. Isaiah teaches that God's house is for all peoples. In other words, it is not just for God's chosen people; it is not just for Israel. Then Paul, speaking as the apostle to the Gentiles (i.e. non-Israelites), insists that "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" and that God has mercy upon all.

So here's the good news. God's mercy and love are for all, no matter their ethnicity or culture or social standing. God's love and mercy are for all, and God's gifts and call are irrevocable. As Paul says in another place, nothing can ever separate us from the love of God.

And here's the challenge: we too are called to faith like that of this remarkable Canaanite woman, the faith to hold on and hold firm through thick and thin, through good times and bad. God does hear our prayers, though not necessarily as or when we think best. But God's delays are not God's denials. Secondly, we too are called to a generous and inclusive love of all, not just in our group, but also for the stranger, the foreigner, the refugee, the outsider. It's a demanding call, a call to practical action each and every day of our lives.

**Anne Hunt**  
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