

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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A woman of great faith



16 August 2026 20th Sunday Year A

Boundaries – geographical, cultural, religious and gender – are crossed in today's gospel. In fact, it's one of the few stories in Matthew's Gospel that takes place outside Jewish territory. Matthew understands the ministry of Jesus being directed firstly to the house of Israel. Only when the good news of the Kingdom of God has been offered to them, will it be offered to "all nations". (Matt 28:19)

Jesus enters the pagan regions of Tyre and Sidon. Both towns were located on the coast north of Israel, and were historically hostile to the Israelites. It's here, in foreign territory, that Jesus is boldly confronted by a Canaanite woman; a descendant of one of Israel's ancient enemies. She symbolises all those who are regarded as 'unclean' by Jesus' own people.

As a mother, she is 'beside herself' with worry and fear for her precious daughter, whom she says is "tormented by a demon". There is no doubt that they would have been subjected to exclusion, suspicion and rejection, based on the false understanding of the time, that such an affliction was a result of sin.

Despite the fact that she is a woman, and an 'outsider', out of desperation and driven by a strong and unrelenting mother's love for her child in need, she calls out to Jesus, declaring him to be, "Lord, Son of David" – a remarkable confession of faith for a non-Jew.

Perhaps surprisingly to us, Jesus initially remains silent; seemingly ignoring the woman and excluding her from his ministry. The disciples are

impatient and don't want to get involved with her, and they ask Jesus to "send her away".

By way of a further rebuke, Jesus declares that his mission is only to "the house of Israel". But the woman is not deterred. Her daughter's life is at stake, and she draws on deep courage and raw nerve to plead with Jesus a second time: "Lord, help me". Jesus' reply seems insensitive: "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs".

This seeming harsh 'put down' of the woman, strengthens her resolve further, and she seizes her opportunity with both hands to challenge Jesus on 'who' are to be the recipients of his ministry. Pet dogs are allowed to eat the crumbs that fall from table, and she is simply asking for one such crumb for her daughter and herself.

The Canaanite woman's single-mindedness, tenacity and persistence, lead Jesus to praise her great faith, and heal her daughter. In doing so, Jesus moves into new territory of understanding himself and his mission. He demonstrates who he really is – the Saviour; and he acknowledges their rightful place among the saved.

The encounter between Jesus and the Canaanite woman reveals the unconditional and unrestricted mercy of Jesus, the power of faith and the promise of salvation for all who believe.

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