

We Respond

www.majellan.media

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

*Brighten up
your day with
The Majellan*

Spiritual nourishment weekly

There is no need to wait for the quarterly magazine, the Majellan weekly newsletter comes out each Wednesday. It is full of inspirational articles, prayers, cooking recipes, podcasts and plenty of Jokes. So, why not join the family and subscribe at: majellan.media/join-the-family/ It is absolutely free!



majellan

*Living on the
margins*



20 August 2023 20th Sunday Year A

Matthew's community consisted of Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles), which contributed to tension and disharmony. The Jewish Christians still saw themselves as Jews. For them, they hadn't changed their religion. Christianity was simply another reform-movement within Judaism. However, being Jewish was not solely about religion, it was also cultural; giving identity, meaning, understanding and depth to life.

The Jews saw themselves as a holy nation, a people set apart; and non-Jews were considered the opposite! So, when non-Jews began joining the new community and growing in number, the Jews felt overwhelmed and uncomfortable with the religious and cultural blending. Questions arose: Were non-Jews welcome in the Christian movement and on what conditions? Who decides about membership and participation? Is there openness to integration and compromise?

Throughout his gospel, Matthew confronts attitudes of superiority and contempt for Gentiles among the Jewish Christians. For example: He introduces and gives prominence to the Gentile Magi. He has Jesus calling his followers to "love your enemies". He shows Jesus curing the servant of a Gentile centurion and exorcising Gentile demons in the region of the Gadarenes.

In today's story, Matthew addresses the differences between a woman and Jesus' disciples. Matthew doesn't just identify her by geography but uses the term 'Canaanite'; an ancient word for Israel's' long-time enemies. He shows that it's the disciples who first have a problem with her: "She's shouting after us." Matthew uses the usual Jewish objection by

having Jesus say: "I was sent only to the lost-sheep of the House of Israel." But then he adds a balancing statement by having Jesus respond to the woman and praise her faith: "Woman, you have great faith."

Matthew shows Jesus being deeply moved by the woman's desperate motherly love and her readiness to trust him. Jesus has no interest in her 'religion' or any questionable moral worthiness, and certainly not that she was a Gentile woman. Jesus is as close to those on the margins as he is to those who belong to the so-called 'inner circle'.

In the conversation between the woman and Jesus, Matthew demonstrates God's abundance: "Even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table." (Recall the feeding of the 5000 - twelve baskets-full of scraps were collected from what was left over). God's grace, mercy and compassion are lavish and reach out beyond Israel to embrace the whole world.

So, who might be today's equivalent of the ostracised Gentile woman or the Gentile and Jewish members of Matthew's community? Like Matthew, perhaps we can use the story to examine contemporary life, with all its questions, differences, uncertainties, tensions and complexities. A good starting point is to see life through the lens of God's unconditional love for everyone and to reach out with respect, compassion and sensitivity to others, especially those pushed to the edges.

David J Hore CSsR
© Majellan Media 2023