

First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7 (*My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples*)

Responsorial Psalm 67: "O God, let all the nations praise you."

Second Reading: Romans 11:13-15, 29-32 (*God will be merciful to all*)

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28 (*Woman, great is your faith!*)

♪: **Let us build a house where all are named, / their song and visions heard
And loved and treasured, taught and claimed / as words within the Word.**

Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace.

Let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE. ♪

Isaiah says in the 1st reading, "My house shall be called a house of prayer FOR ALL PEOPLES." That's what the song is about: ALL ARE WELCOME. "**Todas son bienvenido**" And yet we are still growing into the vision of the prophet. The Gospel is about that kind of growth.

Take a look at the Canaanite woman in today's Gospel.

Did you notice that Jesus did *not* respond to her?

yet he did respond to the disciples' complaints about the woman.

That's because in the culture of Jesus' time only men spoke to men *in public*—

never a woman to a man.

She was ignored by Jesus first of all because she was a woman

& also because she was a pagan/ a Canaanite (from the territory of present-day Lebanon).

But she was a mother whose child was in need & she knew Jesus could help her daughter.

Nothing can stop a mother on a mission like that - to find help for her child.

She persisted no matter what cultural taboos or obstacles she meet.

One of the things we can learn from this encounter is:

~If you fight with God long enough, God wins.

As she persists, Jesus finally answers her but with an insulting remark. Basically, he says to her

what gifts I have to offer are not for *DOGS*, that's code for "others/outsideers"

but only those who like me are "of the house of Israel."

She doesn't disagree with Jesus - she takes what he says & turns his conclusion around.

"Even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from their master's table."

It is clear she experienced being an outcast & knew herself as an outcast,

yet she also knew **God would comfort & heal** her daughter.

Jesus hears what she has to say & it stretches him to a *deeper* understanding of his call—from the Father

to be inclusive of all God's children, even those beyond "the House of Israel."

As Paul proclaims in the 2nd reading that "God will be merciful & compassionate to all"

& Isaiah in the 1st reading, "the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord I will bring to my holy mountain".

Jesus realized that compassion & need sometimes *transform* the rules to include new possibilities.
He praises the woman's trust in **God's** providence and her daughter was healed.

The mission of Jesus is surely to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but the word "ONLY" gets deleted by his exchange with a pagan woman and his experience of her faith.
He came to see her as one of God's children.

He discovered that grace and healing are gifts he is called to offer to the *whole* human family,
not just to members of his own race or nation.

We live in a time when people who are different can be persecuted and attacked.
Jesus meets the Canaanite woman each time we meet someone who is from a different culture or has a different sexual orientation, speaks a language we do not understand, or looks different than our family.

To really hear what God wants me to hear in these times, I need to absorb the insight of Isaiah, Paul and Jesus, that God is both Father and Mother of the whole human race.

In fact, we can only hear the Gospel Jesus preached and lived if we listen from the point of view of the poor and the outcast. That is part of the meaning of the 1st beatitude,
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, the reign of God is theirs."

When we can begin to listen from the perspective of the outcast and the poor, we come to realize that our brothers and sisters are being hurt when Mexicans *and* Italians, Americans *and* Iraqis, Palestinians *and* Israelis are shot or bombed or tortured.

And we see more clearly that **our** sisters and brothers are being fed and healed when the poor of whatever national or ethnic origin get access to health care, when Africans receive drugs for AIDS, when people anywhere are being fed, and when children who are running for their lives from Central America are welcomed and cared for.

Jesus cast a demon out of the daughter of a foreign woman, some of the demons of today that still need to be cast out are named **war** and **violence** and **fundamentalism** and **racism** and **sexism** and **homophobia**.

Jesus still wants to heal our world, and begins that process by healing our hearts.
He invites us to welcome each other and to witness to his good news that All are welcome,
todas son bienvenido.

Let us pray today, and throughout this week, for that healing.

♪ ♪ Let us build a house where hands will reach / Beyond the wood and stone
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach/ And live the Word they've known
Here the outcast and the stranger/Bear the image of God's face;
Let us bring an end to fear and danger.
ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE.
