

August 16, 2026 Homily
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/081626.cfm>

There is an important truth that is sometimes hard to accept. Every single human being belongs to the same human family. For this reason it is important for Christians to put an end to every expression of racism in the world. Today's readings say a lot against racism. They invite us to realize that in God's plan we all are different expressions of what humanity is. Even at the level of religious institutions, often we find ways to exclude others. The Jews in Jesus' times Used to call "dogs" those who were not part of their religion. Some Christians still talk in negative ways about those who have different beliefs or belong to a different political party.

In the first reading, God says to Isaiah, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." God is not talking about a specific nation, but about humanity. He is not talking about a temple, but about the whole world. St. Paul in the second reading affirms that God has mercy upon all peoples. He is basically saying that all the members of the human race are God's chosen people. No exceptions. Then, today's Gospel, describes the journey of a pagan woman with a sick daughter, imploring Jesus to have mercy on her. Jesus is outside Israel in a gentile territory. This woman is very intelligent, because she breaks the exclusive religious and social norms between Jews and gentiles and she comes to Jesus. Even though she is not officially a Jew, her faith is stronger, deeper and more liberating than that of the disciples. She confesses Jesus as "Son of David." The woman knows that God's love is inclusive, and she sees in Jesus, the perfect expression of God's compassion and tender love.

The request of the woman bothers the disciples. They reflect our human tendencies: We would like to have a God Who only loves and saves the people we like. We would love to have a God Who hates the people we don't like. But God always surprises us: Where we expect judgement and exclusion, Jesus enacts mercy and embrace. Where most of us want the unconditional affirmation of our righteousness and of our superiority over others, Jesus discloses our ignorant arrogance and calls us to embrace a higher righteousness.

The woman is not asking for a seat at the table, but for just one scrap of grace. Jesus has come to touch the untouchable, He practices divine hospitality, inviting to his table

people whom nobody thought could be saved, people whom nobody wanted to welcome and be saved. This story tells us something scandalous about grace: God's mercy refuses to stay within the fences we've built. This story also tells us something about faith: Faith is the stubborn conviction that Jesus's mercy includes all the members of the human family. No exceptions. This text dares us to imagine that the church isn't a border wall but a banquet table, and even the crumbs are powerful enough to save.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are in America, a land of immigrants, a land of countless blessings. And we who describe ourselves as Jesus' disciples are to seek the ways of communion and compassion among us. But, what happens when someone outside the religious club or outside the people we like comes knocking, crying for mercy? Do we say, "Send her away"? Or do we dare to imagine that she might already be closer to Jesus than we are? The Canaanite woman won't take "no" for an answer. She presses on—not because she believes she deserves it, but because she knows who Jesus is. She trusts his mercy more than we trust our boundaries. And Jesus gives more than crumbs. He gives healing, praise, and inclusion. The table of the Lord is open wider than we thought. And the best seat might belong to the one we were about to turn away.

Our society needs an inclusive economy. And the Catholic Church must always be an inclusive and loving community. Any expression of racism and hate, doesn't come from God, and has no place among Christians. This Canaanite woman is not praised for her cleverness, her physical appearance, her theology, or her cultural conformity. She is praised for believing, fiercely and humbly, that the mercy of Jesus extends beyond all boundaries. This story is good news for us: It assures us that when we receive the other, when we marvel at the faith of others, and welcome them with loving and merciful respect, that is just what Jesus wants us to do.

The Universal Prayer
Sunday, August 16, 2026
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant:

Sisters and brothers, since the desire of God is to show mercy to all humankind, we can be confident in our prayer made through Jesus Christ.

1. For Pope Leo, that by his care of all humanity, people of every nation will be lifted up in hope.

We pray to the Lord.

2. For our diocese, that with Bishop Luis Zarama, we will be an inclusive Church, open to receive all who seek faith and life in Jesus Christ.

We pray to the Lord.

3. For those who struggle at this time, that the determination of the woman of the Gospel will give hope where life is causing distress and pain.

We pray to the Lord.

4. For people who are trapped by war; in Palestine, Israel and Lebanon and other nearby Middle Eastern nations; between Ukraine and Russia; within Sudan, Myanmar and Haiti, that justice will prevail and peace come to all.

We pray to the Lord.

5. For our American and world leaders, that they may, with their citizens, have a care for justice and always act with integrity.

We pray to the Lord.

6. For the order of the Daughters of St. Mary of Guadalupe and the Diocese of Raleigh, that they have an increase in the number of vocations to religious life and to the priesthood.

We pray to the Lord.

7. For the dead of our parish, families, and community, that they will receive the fulness of God's mercy.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Lord our God, receive the praise of nations as we receive your constant and merciful help. Through Christ our Lord.