

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There are seasons in recovery when old experiences of rejection continue to shape how we see ourselves, others, and God. We may expect to be overlooked, misunderstood, or sent away. Even when relationships are safe, part of us may remain prepared for disappointment. When prayer seems unanswered or healing takes longer than expected, these old beliefs can return: I do not belong. My needs are too much. God helps other people, but not me.

The Canaanite woman in Sunday's gospel approaches Jesus from a position of vulnerability (Matthew 15:21–28). She is an outsider, and her daughter is suffering. She cries out, *"Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!"* At first, Jesus does not answer her. The disciples want her sent away. Yet she remains. She comes closer, does Him homage, and says, *"Lord, help me."*

For many adult children, this moment touches a familiar wound. We may have learned early that asking for help led to dismissal, criticism, or disappointment. We adapted by becoming self-reliant, agreeable, invisible, or highly responsible. These survival patterns helped us endure difficult circumstances, but they can also make it hard to trust that our needs will be received with compassion.

The woman does not disappear, perform, or pretend that she is unaffected. She stays present and speaks honestly. Her humility is not self-contempt. She does not deny her dignity or accept the idea that she is beyond mercy. She simply recognizes that she cannot heal her daughter herself and that even the smallest share in Christ's goodness is enough. Jesus responds, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."*

Her faith challenges the shame many adult children carry. Shame tells us that we must earn love by being useful, easygoing, successful, or strong. It tells us that our mistakes reveal who we truly are. The first reading offers another vision. God promises that His house will be *"a house of prayer for all peoples"* (Isaiah 56:1, 6–7). In God's family, belonging is not reserved for those with an uncomplicated past or a perfect record.

Recovery invites us to approach God as we truly are. We can bring Him our fear of rejection, our anger, our unmet needs, and the parts of our story we would rather hide. Step Two opens us to the possibility that God can restore us to sanity, including a healthier understanding of our identity. Step Three invites us to entrust our lives to His care rather than continuing to organize them around fear, approval, or control.

Persistent faith does not mean repeatedly placing ourselves in relationships where we are mistreated. It means refusing to let past rejection define our worth or determine our future. We seek safe people, practice honest communication, establish boundaries, and learn to receive support. Each time we ask for help without apologizing for existing, tell the truth without managing another person's reaction, or remain present instead of disappearing, we cooperate with grace.

Healing takes time because the beliefs formed in childhood often run deep. Yet slow healing is still healing. God is not impatient with the pace of our growth. He continues to meet us as we return, ask, listen, and take the next faithful step.

The Canaanite woman reminds us that our need does not make us unwelcome. Christ sees beneath the roles we

learned to play and calls forth the faith within us. His mercy is greater than every message that taught us we were too much, not enough, or outside the circle of love. In Him, we are invited to stand with humility, ask with confidence, and receive our place in the household of God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What early experience of rejection or disappointment still influences the way you ask for help or relate to God?

- Which role or survival pattern makes it difficult for you to express your needs honestly and receive support?

- Where are you being invited to trust that your dignity and belonging do not depend on another person's approval?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 56:1, 6–7

RESP. PS. Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8

SECOND READING Romans 11:13–15, 29–32

GOSPEL Matthew 15:21–28