



TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There are seasons in recovery when faith feels less like moving forward and more like continuing to knock on a door that has not yet opened. We pray, attend meetings, reach out for help, and try to make faithful choices. Yet the change we long for may come slowly. Old patterns remain stubborn. Relationships may still be strained. Peace may seem distant. In those moments, we can begin to wonder whether God is listening or whether our efforts matter.

The Canaanite woman in Sunday's gospel knows what it is to keep asking when the answer does not come immediately (Matthew 15:21–28). She approaches Jesus with a desperate plea for her daughter: *"Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!"* At first, Jesus does not answer her. The disciples want to send her away. Even when the conversation becomes difficult, she remains before Him. She kneels and says, *"Lord, help me."*

Her persistence is striking, but so is her humility. She does not demand that Jesus prove Himself. She does not turn away in anger or defend her worthiness. She trusts that even the smallest share in His mercy is enough. Jesus responds, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."* Her daughter is healed from that hour.

Many of us come into recovery carrying the belief that we have disqualified ourselves from God's mercy. Shame tells us that we have failed too many times, damaged too much, or wandered too far. We may feel like outsiders looking in on a life of peace and freedom that belongs to other people. The first reading answers that fear with God's promise that those once considered outsiders will be welcomed: *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples"* (Isaiah 56:1, 6–7). God's mercy is not reserved for those with a

perfect history. His house has room for people who arrive wounded, ashamed, and desperate for help.

The Canaanite woman shows us the posture of recovery. She recognizes that she cannot solve the problem herself. She brings her need directly to Christ. She remains honest, teachable, and willing to keep trusting even when she does not understand what is happening. This resembles the surrender at the heart of Step Three. We place our will and our lives into God's care, not because we understand His timing, but because we trust His character. If we do not yet trust His character, perhaps we need to spend a little more time on Step Two.

Persistent faith does not mean repeating the same prayer while refusing to take action. It means continuing to cooperate with grace. We return to meetings. We tell the truth. We seek reconciliation where appropriate. We accept guidance. We make the next right decision even when dramatic results have not yet appeared. Humility keeps us from insisting that healing must happen according to our plan. Hope keeps us from giving up.

Recovery rarely unfolds as quickly as we would choose. Sobriety may require repeated surrender. Emotional healing takes time. Trust is rebuilt through consistent action. Character defects lose their power gradually as we practice new habits and rely on God's strength. None of this means that grace is absent. The quiet willingness to return, ask for help, and begin again is itself evidence that God is at work.

Faith is not measured by how quickly our circumstances change. It is revealed by our willingness to keep turning

toward Christ, day after day, even when answers remain incomplete. The Canaanite woman reminds us that humble persistence is never wasted. God's mercy is greater than our past, deeper than our shame, and strong enough to sustain us while healing unfolds.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where are you tempted to believe that your past failures have placed you beyond God's mercy?
- What unanswered prayer or slow-moving area of recovery is asking you to practice greater humility and persistent trust?
- What concrete action can you take to cooperate with grace rather than demand that healing happen according to your timing?

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