

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There are seasons in recovery when the desire for freedom is sincere, yet temptation continues to return. We pray, make commitments, attend meetings, and remove obvious sources of temptation. Still, old fantasies, habits, and patterns of escape can reappear. When progress feels slow, shame may tell us that we are uniquely broken or that God has grown tired of hearing us ask for help.

The Canaanite woman in Sunday's gospel knows what it means to continue seeking mercy when the answer does not come immediately (Matthew 15:21–28). Her daughter is suffering, and she approaches Jesus crying out, *“Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!”* At first, He does not answer her. The disciples want her sent away. Even when the exchange becomes difficult, she remains before Christ and says, *“Lord, help me.”*

Her persistence is matched by humility. She does not pretend to possess power she does not have. She does not defend herself or demand that Jesus respond on her terms. She trusts that even the smallest share in His mercy is enough. Jesus answers, *“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”* Her faith is revealed through her willingness to remain honest, dependent, and open to grace.

Recovery from lust addiction requires this same posture. We cannot heal ourselves through determination alone, nor can we bargain with temptation while expecting freedom. We bring our weakness into the light and keep returning to Christ. We admit when our thoughts have begun drifting toward fantasy. We call a sponsor or trusted recovering person before secrecy gains momentum. We receive the sacraments, practice custody of the eyes, and take concrete action to protect the freedom God is restoring.

Shame often insists that repeated temptation means we are beyond mercy. It tells us to hide until we have made ourselves worthy of God's help. The first reading gives a different promise. God declares that His house will be *“a house of prayer for all peoples”* (Isaiah 56:1, 6–7). No one who sincerely seeks Him is excluded. Our history, failures, and disordered desires do not place us outside the reach of His grace.

This does not make persistence passive. Humble faith cooperates with grace. We do not merely ask God to remove temptation while continuing to protect the conditions that feed it. We examine our routines, relationships, use of technology, emotional triggers, and places of isolation. We accept guidance even when it challenges us. We become willing to surrender not only explicit behavior, but also the private fantasies and subtle compromises that keep lust alive.

This movement reflects Steps Two and Three. We come to believe that God can restore us to sanity, including the sanity to see lust clearly rather than romanticize it. Then we entrust our will and our lives to His care. That surrender must be renewed whenever fear, entitlement, loneliness, or resentment tempts us to seek counterfeit intimacy.

Healing rarely unfolds all at once. Chastity grows through repeated acts of honesty, humility, and reliance on God. Each time we interrupt fantasy, reach out instead of isolating, confess without minimizing, or choose authentic connection over escape, we cooperate with grace. These choices may seem small, but they gradually re-form our desires.

The Canaanite woman reminds us that humble persistence is never wasted. Christ is not repelled by our need. He invites

us to remain before Him, tell the truth, and trust that His mercy is stronger than our shame. Freedom grows as we stop hiding, keep asking for help, and allow grace to reach the places we once guarded in secrecy.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When temptation returns, what thoughts or feelings make you most likely to hide rather than ask for help?

- What fantasy, compromise, routine, or place of isolation are you being invited to surrender more completely?

- What concrete action can you take this week to cooperate with grace before secrecy or temptation gains momentum?

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