

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday Mass Readings & Spiritual Leadership Guide

August 16, 2026 · Lectionary 118

Sunday Mass Readings

FIRST READING

Isaiah 56:1, 6–7

Thus says the LORD: Observe what is right, do what is just; for my salvation is about to come, my justice, about to be revealed. The foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, ministering to him, loving the name of the LORD, and becoming his servants—all who keep the sabbath free from profanation and hold to my covenant, them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

May God have pity on us and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us. So may your way be known upon earth; among all nations, your salvation.

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

May the nations be glad and exult because you rule the peoples in equity; the nations on the earth you guide.

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you! May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear him!

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

***Men Helping Men Step Up and Become Better Spiritual Leaders
by Following Christ and the Teachings of His Church***



SECOND READING

Romans 11:13–15, 29–32

Brothers and sisters: I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I glory in my ministry in order to make my race jealous and thus save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you once disobeyed God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.

GOSPEL

Matthew 15:21–28

At that time, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon.” But Jesus did not say a word in answer to her. Jesus’ disciples came and asked him, “Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us.” He said in reply, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But the woman came and did Jesus homage, saying, “Lord, help me.” He said in reply, “It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.” Then Jesus said to her in reply, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And the woman’s daughter was healed from that hour.

All readings sourced from USCCB, Lectionary 118. bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/081626.cfm

Reflection

Isaiah's vision is breathtaking in its scope: God's house is to be a house of prayer for all peoples—not just Israel, but every foreigner who loves the Lord. The Canaanite woman in the Gospel lives that vision before it is fully announced. She is outside every boundary—the wrong ethnicity, the wrong religion, the wrong gender in that culture—and yet she refuses to accept exclusion. Her persistence is not presumption; it is faith. Jesus names it: “O woman, great is your faith!” Paul ties the thread together: God's mercy is not a finite resource rationed to the deserving. He delivered all to disobedience precisely so he could have mercy upon all. The spiritual leader these readings form is one who leads with a wide welcome—who does not gatekeep grace, who recognizes faith wherever it appears, and who keeps going even when the door seems closed.

Leadership Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Great Leadership Has a Wide Welcome

God's house is “a house of prayer for all peoples” (Is 56:7). The LORD explicitly includes foreigners—those outside the expected circle. Leaders who lead only for people like them are building something smaller than God intends. Expanding the circle is not a concession; it is obedience.

PRINCIPLE 2

Recognize Faith Wherever It Appears

Jesus did not expect great faith from the Canaanite woman—and yet there it was (Mt 15:28). Those who only look for gifts, insight, and courage in familiar places will miss the people God has already prepared outside their usual circles. Great faith rarely arrives with the credentials we expect.

PRINCIPLE 3

Persist Through Silence and Resistance

The woman was met first with silence, then with resistance, then with a hard word—and she did not quit (Mt 15:23–27). When interceding for others, advocating for the marginalized, or pushing through an unjust system, you will need to learn that silence is not the final answer. Persistence rooted in love outlasts every obstacle.

PRINCIPLE 4

Humility Is Not Weakness—It Is Leverage

The woman did not argue her status; she argued from her neediness—“even the dogs eat the scraps” (Mt 15:27). She won not by asserting her rights but by trusting God's generosity. Leaders who can lead from a posture of humility, asking rather than demanding, access a kind of influence that pride cannot reach.

PRINCIPLE 5

God's Mercy Is Not Zero-Sum

Paul declares that God delivered all to disobedience “that he might have mercy upon all” (Rom 11:32). Mercy extended to one does not diminish what is available to another. Leaders who operate from a zero-sum mentality—protecting their share of influence, credit, or resources—are working against the grain of God's economy.

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Discussion Questions

QUESTION 1

Isaiah says God's house is to be "a house of prayer for all peoples" (Is 56:7). Who are the "foreigners"—the unexpected people—that God may be inviting into your team, your group, or your community? What barriers, spoken or unspoken, might be making them feel unwelcome?

QUESTION 2

The Canaanite woman persisted through silence, resistance, and a hard word before Jesus responded (Mt 15:23–28). Think of a time when you kept going despite silence or apparent rejection. What sustained you? Is there something you have given up on too quickly that may need a second approach?

QUESTION 3

Jesus said, "O woman, great is your faith!" (Mt 15:28). Where have you recently encountered unexpected faith—in someone outside your usual circle, someone younger, someone you underestimated? What did that encounter teach you about where God is at work?

QUESTION 4

The woman's approach was marked by humility rather than demand—she asked from her neediness rather than her rights (Mt 15:27). Where in your leadership are you more likely to demand than to ask? What would it look like to lead from a posture of greater humility this week?

QUESTION 5

Paul writes that God delivered all to disobedience "that he might have mercy upon all" (Rom 11:32). Do you tend to lead from abundance or scarcity when it comes to credit, recognition, and opportunity? How does the boundlessness of God's mercy challenge a zero-sum approach in your own leadership?

Closing Action

A concrete, personal response drawn from the readings this week:

This week, identify one person you have been slow to welcome, easy to overlook, or quick to underestimate. It might be someone new to your group, someone from a different background, or someone whose faith looks different from yours. Take one concrete step toward them—a conversation, an invitation, a word of genuine acknowledgment. Ask God to give you eyes to see the faith he has already placed in them (Mt 15:28).

“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” — Matthew 15:28

Closing Prayer

Lord God, you declared that your house would be a house of prayer for all peoples. Forgive us for the times we have made it smaller—for the circles we have drawn too tightly, the welcome we have withheld, the unexpected people we have turned away. Expand our hearts to match the width of your invitation.

Jesus, you called a woman an outsider had no right to claim—and you honored her faith. Give us eyes to see faith wherever you have placed it. Teach us to stop gatekeeping grace and start recognizing your work in the people we least expect. Let our leadership create space for the faith of others to flourish.

Holy Spirit, you are not a finite resource. Your mercy cannot be exhausted, your gifts cannot be depleted, your call cannot be revoked. Free us from the scarcity that makes us hoard influence and credit. Fill us with the generosity of God, who delivered all to disobedience only so he could have mercy upon all. Amen.

“O God, let all the nations praise you!” — Psalm 67:4