

## ***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study**

### **20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020—A Cycle Readings**



Jesus and the Canaanite Mother  
[Jean-Germain Drouais](#) (1763-1788)

*Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, you will find links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.*

*Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links. Exception: In the course of the lesson, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.*

### **Opening Prayer**

*(edited and abridged for use here)*

Dear Lord, let me make the best of each and every day.  
Clear my mind, so I can hear you.  
Broaden my mind to accept all things according to your will.  
Help me make the best of each and every day.  
Clear my mind to hear when you speak to me.  
Over things I cannot control, let all work together for my good and for your glory.  
When I can't seem to pray, listen to the prayer of my heart.  
When pushed beyond my limits, help me to sing, "Alleluia."

Source: "Prayer Brings Miracles" website

*(Marked as an unsafe website by Google, because it has not updated from <http> to the safer <https>)*

## **Introduction to the 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

The theme of this week's readings is *inclusiveness*. The inspired word announces to us, "No one is 'other.'"

Isaiah 56: 1, 6-7 "Maintain what is right and do what is just."

This passage derives from what biblical scholars call "Third Isaiah." Its origin dates from the post-Babylonian-exile period (after 500 BC/BCE). The Jewish slaves—those few still living and the majority born in exile—have returned to Jerusalem. However, the miracles promised in "Second Isaiah" (Chapters 40-55), have not occurred. The unidentified prophet-author witnesses to the difficult effort to resurrect the Jews' former prosperity and way of life. Upon returning from Babylon, they find strangers occupying their cities and towns—even their former homes. The former exiles strive to organize and solve problems stemming from their seven-decade absence.

Psalm 67: 2-3, 5-6, 8 "May God be gracious and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us."

The Psalms are a collection of poetic songs used in Temple worship. Tradition has it that David composed *all* the psalms and regulated the Jewish Temple liturgy of his time. It is more likely that the Levites in charge of sacred music had a greater role in the writing and selection of the psalms.

Romans 11: 13-15, 29-32 "God has submitted all to disobedience, in order to show his mercy to all."

The spirit of St. Paul is a shining manifestation of the presence of the Risen Christ in Apostolic times (1<sup>st</sup> c. AD). Through Paul's letters, his dynamic ministry continues to teach and bear fruit in the hearts of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians everywhere.

Matthew 15: 21-28 (Jesus said) "'Woman, how great is your faith.' . . . And her daughter was healed at that moment."

One of the paradoxes around Jesus' miracles is the myriad circumstances and 'methods' surrounding them. Some miracles happened with him barely noticing, e.g., by touching the hem of his clothing. Others, from a distance, without his physical presence at all. Still others required his physical presence. In this weekend's gospel reading, Jesus is on foreign soil in Phoenician (pagan) territory around the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

A mother interrupts him, begging healing for her "possessed" daughter. The apostles saw she was interrupting Jesus and wanted him to send her away. In their minds, this pagan woman was unfit for consideration by a Jewish healer. Besides, her persistent interruptions made her a real pest. Even Jesus makes her "jump through hoops," before agreeing to her request.

We might legitimately ask, "Why, Lord? What was the problem? She did what any good mother would, in her circumstances."

## **A Reading from the Book of Isaiah (56: 1, 6-7)**

“This is what Yahweh says:

“Maintain what is right and do what is just, for my salvation is close at hand, my justice is soon to come. Yahweh says to the foreigners who join him, serving him and loving his name, keeping his Sabbath unprofaned and remaining faithful to his Covenant, “I will bring them to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. I will accept on my altar their burnt offerings and sacrifices, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations.””

### **Personal Reflection**

Yahweh says: “I will accept on my altar their burnt offerings and sacrifices, for my house will be called a house of prayer for *all* the nations.” Many modern Christians think of ancient Israel as a closed, Israelites only, religious society. Some Catholics also think of their own Church and sacraments as gifts to be kept private and closely guarded—exclusively for themselves.

— *How is our parish community living up to the hymn we often sing at Mass: “All are welcome in this place”? In “normal” times, how welcoming am I to strangers, when I am at Mass?*

— *As an example, consider the offering of Communion at funerals, weddings—or all Masses—to those who are not Catholic. How do I justify permitting this? If I am opposed to this practice, how do I justify denying sacraments to baptized Christians of other denominations?*

### **Antiphon: Psalm 67 (2-3, 5-6, 8)**

A harvest song

*O God, let all the nations praise you!*

May God be gracious and bless us;  
may he let his face shine upon us;  
that your way be known on earth  
and your salvation, among the nations.

*O God, let all the nations praise you!*

May the countries be glad and sing for joy,  
for you rule the peoples with justice;  
and guide the nations of the world.

*O God, let all the nations praise you!*

May the peoples praise you, O God,  
may all the peoples praise you  
*O God, let all the nations praise you!*  
May God bless us and be revered,  
to the very ends of the earth.

*O God, let all the nations praise you!*

### Personal Reflection

We are likely to think of ancient Israel as a closed, tight-knit, exclusive society—God's *chosen* people (not anyone else's). Psalm 67 reveals a broader side of Jewish belief: "Let *all* the nations praise you!"

— *If I am a "cradle" Catholic, what are my memories of a superior, "Catholic Church for Catholics only," mentality?*

The psalms, including those considered post-Davidic, invite *all the nations* to come and praise Yahweh.

— *What damage has believers' "us vs. them" mentality done to thwart Yahweh-God's desire for ecumenical inclusion?*

Some "older folks" may recall a time pre-Vatican II (1962-1965), when American Catholics bragged that "our" Catholic Church was "bigger than General Motors!"

— *When have I found traces of religious superiority creeping into my own Catholic faith and practice? If I still find areas of religious bias within me, what are today's readings urging me to think and do?*

### **Second Reading: From St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (11: 13-15, 29-32)**

"Listen to me, you who are *not* Jews: I am spending myself as an apostle to the *pagan nations*, but I hope my ministry will be successful enough to awaken the jealousy of those of *my race*, and, finally, to save some of them. If the [pagan] world made peace with God, when they remained *apart*, what will it be, when they are *welcomed*? Nothing less than, a passing from *death* to *life*.

"The call of God and his gifts cannot be nullified. Through the disobedience of the Jews, the mercy of God came to you who did not obey God. They, in turn, will receive mercy, in due time, after this disobedience, that brought God's mercy to you. So, God has submitted all to disobedience, in order to show his mercy to all."

## Personal Reflection

For St. Paul to write the above words to the Jewish and Gentile converts in Rome, he must have already wrestled with this issue for many years, since his conversion on the road to Damascus. By the time he writes to the Romans, Paul is all too aware that his own ministry to the Jewish people in their synagogues throughout the Roman empire has resulted in fewer conversions than he expected. In fact, he suffered more floggings, stoning, and expulsions at the hands of fellow Jews than any civil authorities.

— *Where in today's second reading does Paul express what he has learned from broad rejection by his fellow Jews of the "diaspora" (those scattered and living outside Israel)? What is his message on this to the faithful Jewish converts in Rome?*

— *Have I ever suffered in any way for being a faithful Catholic? What were the circumstances? What did the experience teach me?*

— *If I have never suffered discrimination for my faith, is that something to be proud of? To what extent might it say I've kept my beliefs to myself, in order to "fit in" with those who do not share my faith—and might even penalize me in some way, if I do speak up about my beliefs?*

## **Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (15: 21-28)**

"Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

"A Canaanite woman from the area, came and cried out, 'Lord, Son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is tormented by a demon.'

"But Jesus did not answer her, not even a word. So his disciples approached him and said, 'Send her away! See how she is shouting after us.'

"Then Jesus said to her, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the nation of Israel.'

"But the woman was already kneeling before Jesus, and said, 'Sir, help me!'

"Jesus answered, 'It is not right to take the bread from the children and throw it to puppies.'

"The woman replied, 'That is true, sir, but even puppies eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.'

"Then Jesus said, 'Woman, how great is your faith! Let it be as you wish.' And her daughter was healed at that moment."

## Personal Reflection

— *What is Jesus doing in this tense encounter that seems "un-Christlike?"*

— *Thinking back on my own past behavior, when have I treated someone the way Jesus' initially treated this frantic mother? What was my reason for acting that way? How did it turn out—for better or for worse? How might I change my behavior if I were to relive that encounter today.*

## **Shelter-in-Place**

The long weeks of social and religious isolation drag on and on with no clear end in sight. Some of our fellow Americans—even members of our own Catholic faith community—throw caution to the wind, seeming to prefer contagion (and possible death) to the current disruption of normal life.

— *How closely do I identify with the feelings of those who say, “I’m going to live my life the way I want, the way it was before.”*

— *If I prefer to follow a cautionary approach out of concern for others, am I in it for the long haul? How close am I to saying, “Ah, who cares? I’m going to live by my rules not anyone else’s.”*

State governors, school districts, teachers, and parents are edging closer to managing the opening of school. Many districts have already decided to “go virtual” until they can be sure that classrooms are safe again—for both students and faculty.

— *How will these decisions affect my family?*

— *How concerned am I that many families in my city and county cannot afford to provide computers and internet access in their homes? What might I as one person do about this?*

Write about your feelings and your lived experience during your journaling time (below).

## **Journaling Prompts**

What insights have I gained from reflecting on the readings for the 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time and my current social demands and restrictions. Suggested prompt:

— *After reflecting on these readings, what made the deepest impression on me?*

We mustn’t simply be grateful “recipients” of God’s good gifts. We need to be “givers,” too.

— *How will this week’s Scriptures and current societal events impact the way I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

## **For Inspirational Viewing / Listening**

View:

“[Capture the Heart of God,](#)” by [Rabbi Kurt Schneider](#)

Kurt Schneider, a Jew, calls himself a Christian rabbi. He ministers under the banner, "Discovering the Jewish Jesus." In this video, he parses the Lord's prayer. A bit long at 20 minutes, but you won't be bored. Klick on his name above to go to his website. There you can watch a 3-min. video in which he explains how he, a Jew, evolved into a believer in Christ and how he harmonizes his Jewish roots with his love for the Jewish Messiah

## Song

[Miracles](#) by [Jesus Culture Music](#)

This is a community of worship leaders and musicians, whose aim is to see a generation impacted by encounters with the presence of God. At 8 minutes, "Miracles" is best suited as background for the viewers' own meditation on Jesus' ministry of healing.

## **Preview of Next Session**

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 22: 19-23 "You will be deposed, strong man . . . . On that day. I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah."

Psalms 138: 1-3, 6, 8 "Lord, your son is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands."

Romans 11: 33-36 "How deep are the riches, the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Matthew 16: 13-20 "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

## **Closing Prayer**

[The Miracle Prayer](#)

Pray along with Deacon Keith Fournier in this beautiful video from [catholic.org](#).

## **Questions?**

Send any questions or comments you might have to [algarrotto@comcast.net](mailto:algarrotto@comcast.net)

The Sunday readings are from [Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition](#)

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