



# Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
August 20, 2023

## Insider Versus Outsider

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Our need to belong often creates community. As nurturing and supportive as communities can be, they can also be exclusive, concerned only with the insiders and marginalizing the outsiders. Today’s readings depict something remarkable. We read that foreigners, or outsiders, enjoy hospitality and privilege that one would expect only insiders to receive.

The prophet Isaiah states that even foreigners will worship in the temple. This is not a story after conversion to the religion of Israel, but of Israel taking a step toward universality: “My house shall be called / a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:7).

### Sunday Readings

#### Isaiah 56:1, 6–7

Them I will bring to my holy mountain / and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

#### Romans 11:13–15, 29–32

For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

#### Matthew 15:21–28

[Jesus said to the Canaanite Woman...],  
“O woman, great is your faith!  
Let it be done for you as you wish.”

The Gospel story recounts a discussion between Jesus and a Canaanite woman. She was doubly marginalized—as an inferior woman and as a despised Canaanite. Yet, her love for her daughter compelled her to approach Jesus, pleading for help—something a “proper” Jewish woman would never do to a man, nor a Canaanite to a Jew. Many in Israel certainly had a sense of exclusivity, and a disdain for the Canaanites. Those may be evident in Jesus’ reply, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). But we can be sure that Jesus—God’s love in the flesh—didn’t share his countrymen’s disdain for anyone. The woman, having heard that Jesus was a healer, remains undaunted. She crosses restrictive gender and ethnic lines in her search for help. Jesus finally praises her, not for her love, but for the faith that her love engendered. And she was a Canaanite! †

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### A Word from Pope Francis

Let each one of us think of his or her own story. There are always ugly things in a story, always. Let us go to Jesus, knock on Jesus’ heart and say to Him: “Lord, if You will it, you can heal me!” We can do this if we always have the face of Jesus before us.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 16, 2020



### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What groups are marginalized by our society?
- What is difficult about welcoming people who are new to your groups?

# I Belong to God!

Daniel P. Horan, OFM

Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, the archbishop emeritus of Washington, DC, tells a story that takes place when he was at a large family reunion. He didn't recognize all of the many members of his extended family, particularly the great-nephews and -nieces, second cousins, and the like.

While waiting in line for some food, he struck up a conversation with a young boy who was also waiting in the food line but whom the cardinal didn't recognize. So Cardinal McCarrick asked the child, "Who do you belong to?" meaning that he was interested in learning who the boy's parents are and how he might be related to them. Without missing a beat, the boy said in response: "God! I belong to God!"

Cardinal McCarrick recounts that story with great humility and awe at the wisdom of such a young person. He didn't expect that response, which is partly why the story is so compelling.



Most adults would not immediately identify God as the one to whom they belong. Nationality, religious tradition, ethnic heritage, language group, racial identity, among so many other categories and characteristics might come to mind. But at the core of our faith tradition, we Christians profess that we belong to God, which makes us all sisters and brothers.

The lyrics of John Lennon's song "Imagine" come to mind. It serves as

a secular prayer for yet another gift of the Holy Spirit, one not counted among the usual seven. This is the gift of imagination, a virtue and skill necessary to live out the gospel call of Christ. Lennon invited his hearers to imagine the possibility that things that divide us—nationalism, greed, possessiveness, and even at times religion—were nonexistent. Could we imagine giving up our excuses for exclusion, our reasons for retaliation?"

The Church is, in many ways, like an incredibly capacious family reunion. It comprises sisters and brothers in Christ, the sons and daughters of God, united in our shared baptism and faith. But so often we let other identity markers and differences—real and perceived—get in the way of reunion, of our communion. May we work to be more mindful of the relationships we have as children of God and sisters and brothers to one another. †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* by Daniel P. Horan, OFM, © 2017 Liguori Publications (827303).

The biblical word for "peace," *Shalom*, refers to well-being in all matters that relate to the good of the human person, human society, and indeed, the whole world. We are peacemakers when we work actively to bridge differences, heal wounds, eliminate injustice, and bring people together. In doing so, we participate in God's work of establishing peace between nations, in communities, and indeed, in the human heart.

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor,  
*Blessed Are the Peacemakers*, Liguorian, January 2013

## PRAYER

*God of all nations, hear the prayers of your people this day and unite our prayers to those of believers everywhere. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

## WEEKDAY READINGS

August 21–26

**Monday**, St. Pius X:

Jgs 2:11–19 / Mt 19:16–22

**Tuesday**, The Queenship of the Blessed

Virgin Mary: Jgs 6:11–24a / Mt 19:23–30

**Wednesday**, Weekday:

Jgs 9:6–15 / Mt 20:1–16

**Thursday**, St. Bartholomew:

Rv 21:9b–14 / Jn 1:45–51

**Friday**, Weekday: Ru 1:1, 3–6, 14b–16, 22 / Mt 22:34–40

**Saturday**, Weekday: Ru 2:1–3, 8–11; 4:13–17 / Mt 23:1–12

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