

August 20, 2017      20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
**Lord, give strength to you people!**

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Psalm 67

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Matthew 15:21-28

In the first reading Isaiah repeats the words of the Lord to the Israelites: "Observe what is right and do what is just. Justice is about to be revealed and salvation about to come." Those who keep the Sabbath free from profanation and keep the covenant will find joy in the Lord's house of prayer for it is a house of prayer for all peoples.

The Psalmist proclaims that the Lord rules the people in equity and guides the nations on earth. He prays for God's blessing and reminds the people to keep up their praises.

In the second reading Paul's message is directed toward the Gentiles. They were once disobedient and have now received mercy and in a similar way the people of Israel are disobedient and now it is their turn to receive mercy. The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

In the Gospel a Canaanite woman seeks healing for her tormented daughter and the disciples want to reject her pleadings since she is not of the house of Israel. Her great faith captures Jesus' attention and her request is granted. The woman's daughter is healed at that very moment.



The Father's justice is about to be revealed,  
The Son's salvation is about to come to the people,  
The Holy Spirit guides us to the right place at the right time.

The words of Isaiah remind us to do what is right according to our consciences and to be just in our dealings with others. This is especially important when life seems hard and there appears no way out of the difficulties. The psalmist indicates that if we add our praises to God's guidance we will indeed be blessed and our sadness will be turned to joy. Paul reminds us the God is not to be denied so that his call and gifts are irrevocable while Jesus makes the point that a strong faith will have important outcomes.

Saint Alphonsus Liguori wrote many articles and books on moral theology, of which he is considered a master. One book was entitled "Love is Prayer, Prayer is Love" and if we interchange the word **Love** in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 with the word **Prayer** we obtain a most relevant description:

**Prayer** is patient, prayer is kind.  
It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated,  
it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests,  
Prayer is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,  
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.  
It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.  
**Prayer never fails.**

*We pray that the Lord have mercy on the poor, the sick, and the suffering  
who cry out in their need and pain just as the Canaanite woman did.*