

CELEBRATE SABBATH

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**A moment of stillness, even very short, is like a minute vacation,
a holy stop, a sabbatical rest, a truce of worries.**

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

After the Hebrews returned from Babylon, they found many foreigners, not of the Jewish religion living there. The anonymous prophet, whom we call the third Isaiah, had to face this changed situation. Ezekiel, the prophet was opposed to uncircumcised foreigners in the temple precincts. The third Isaiah takes a more lenient attitude. This excerpt is a poem which lists the conditions under which non-Jews may worship in the temple. "Their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar".

The prophet has introduced universalism in the history of salvations. God is a God of all and not just of Israel and God's salvation is open to all. God's intent is to welcome all who observe what is right and do what is just. This is reflected in the Gospel of this Sunday. We read about Jesus reaching out to Canaanite woman and healing her.

Cultivate a deep respect for all people. Pray for unity in diversity.

Psalms 67

This Psalm was composed for public worship. It begins with the traditional Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:24-25. It is a simple and beautiful prayer for God's blessing for all people, that all people and nations may know the salvation of our God; that all people and nations may shout for joy; that God may be known to the ends of the earth.

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

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Paul continued to explain to the Christians in Rome that no one can be saved except through the mercy of God. God's purpose is a purpose of salvation, not destruction. The purpose of God can never be frustrated. Paul insisted that the salvation offered first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles is still available to all because of God's mercy. Regardless of human sin and imperfection, God's word remains true and accomplishes its saving purpose for the Jews for the Gentiles and for all. Nothing will separate us from the Love of God, said Paul. God's mercy extends to all regardless of their land of origin, language, and culture. The gifts that are God's alone to bestow are irrevocable.

Neither sin nor disobedience or any act of man can frustrate the plan and purpose of God.

Mathew 15:21-28

This excerpt must be understood in light of the friction that continued to exist between Christians from Jewish background and pagan converts. It was basically a tension between classic Jewish exclusionism and the universal will of salvation of all people, revealed in Jesus.

This excerpt teaches us that faith breaks down barriers between Jews and Gentiles and in fact faith breaks down all barriers. “Woman, you have great faith. Your wish will come to pass”, Jesus said to the Canaanite woman.

Let your faith make you free to love all people.

Be open-minded! Cultivate respect for all.

Break down barriers that keep you apart from other people and cultures and religious traditions.

Saint of the day, August 16 - St. Stephen of Hungary and 11 other saints are remembered this day

Stephen was born around the year 975. He was born as Vajk, a name derived from the Turkic word baj, meaning "hero", "master", "prince" or "rich". Legend tells us that he was baptized by the saintly Bishop Adalbert of Prague around the age of 10, together with his father, chief of the Magyars, a group who migrated to the Danube area in the ninth century.

At 20, he married Gisela, sister to the future emperor, Saint Henry. When he succeeded his father, Stephen adopted a policy of Christianization of the country for both political and religious reasons. He suppressed a series of revolts by pagan nobles and welded the Magyars into a strong national group. He asked the pope to provide for the Church's organization in Hungary and requested that the pope confer the title of king upon him. He was crowned on Christmas day in 1001.

Stephen established a system of tithes to support churches and pastors and to relieve the poor. Out of every 10 towns one had to build a church and support a priest. He abolished pagan customs with a certain amount of violence, and commanded all to marry, except clergy and religious. He was easily accessible to all, especially the poor. In 1031, his son Emeric died, and the rest of Stephen's days were embittered by controversy over his successor. His nephews attempted to kill him. He died in 1038 and was canonized, along with his son, in 1083.

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