

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 20 August – Trinity 11

COLLECT

O God, you declare your almighty power
most chiefly in showing mercy and pity:
mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace,
that we, running the way of your commandments,
may receive your gracious promises,
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 67

- 1 God be gracious to us and bless us ♦
and make his face to shine upon us,
- 2 That your way may be known upon earth, ♦
your saving power among all nations.
- 3 Let the peoples praise you, O God; ♦
let all the peoples praise you.
- 4 O let the nations rejoice and be glad, ♦
for you will judge the peoples righteously and govern the nations upon earth.
- 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God; ♦
let all the peoples praise you.
- 6 Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, ♦
and God, our own God, will bless us.
- 7 God will bless us, ♦
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans, chapter 11.1–2a,29–32

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia! Alleluia!

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 15, verses 10 to 28

Glory to you, O Lord

Then Jesus called the crowd to him and said to them, 'Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.' Then the disciples approached and said to him, 'Do you know that the Pharisees took offence when they heard what you said?' He answered, 'Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.' But Peter said to him, 'Explain this parable to us.' Then he said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.'

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Peter...

Today's Gospel seems very strange. The first part is all about food going in and words coming out. And the second part talks about giving the children's food to dogs – more food and more mouths! But it all frames one of the most moving encounters in the Gospel. Jesus has been trying to show his disciples that even religious leaders like the Pharisees can get things badly wrong. He encourages his disciples to think carefully about the way in which evil intentions, nurtured in the heart, can come out as destructive patterns of behaving.

Then, as he is on his way, a Canaanite woman (someone already disadvantaged and disregarded) approaches him in desperation, seeking his help for her daughter. The disciples seem to think that she is an example, like the Pharisees, of someone caught up with evil. And Jesus appears to agree "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the woman persists. She answers Jesus back – and Jesus responds with healing for her daughter. Now, you could argue that if the woman had taken Jesus' words at face value she would just have given up and gone away.

What matters here is that the encounter tells us that God does indeed know us through and through. At every moment we are to be ourselves; to speak confidently to God, to be truthful, open, clear. The more we are able to speak the truth from our heart the more we know and understand ourselves and the more we know and understand God and his unbounded love for all creation.