

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

O God, be gracious and bless us
and let your face shed its light upon us.
So will your ways be known upon earth
and all nations learn your saving help

Psalm

Thus says the Lord: Have a care for justice, act with integrity,
for soon my salvation will come and my integrity be manifest.

First Reading

God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice. *Second Reading*

Almighty God, ever loving Father,
your care extends beyond the boundaries of race and nation
to the hearts of all who live.

May the walls, which prejudice raises between us,
crumble beneath the shadow of your outstretched arm.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to explore further:
Isaiah 56: 1.6–7; Ps. 66 (67); Romans 11: 13–15.29–32; Matt. 15: 21–28



'Woman,
you have
great faith.'

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A, 16th August 2020

Let all the peoples praise you, O God!

God's plan of salvation is for all people. The loving Spirit of God is poured into the whole of creation and rests within everyone. This truth is revealed throughout Scripture and is a message of hope for all times.

The prophet Isaiah (**First Reading**) calls us to act with integrity and justice, recognising that a time will come when true faith in the Lord of love and compassion will find expression in people of all faith and none.

This universal vision is echoed in both the response and the verses of the **Psalm**. The light of God's love shines upon all people of every tribe and nation. This is a text that speaks to our times, reminding us of our common humanity, bound together by the love and blessings of God.

In the letter to the Romans (**Second Reading**), Paul teaches that God is faithful to his promises and will never take back the gifts he has so lovingly and freely given to all people. God's mercy is for all of humanity.

In the **Gospel**, we witness what at first seems an uncharacteristically harsh response from Jesus to a desperately worried mother. In this exchange, a foreign pagan woman with a daughter troubled by an evil spirit approaches him directly for help. She has so much faith in Jesus that she even reveals a truth about him that his own disciples have yet to recognise. Jesus's initial rebuff to her cry for help, and her unwavering faith in him, offers an opportunity for him to teach his disciples that God's healing love is available for all people, no matter what their race or religion may be.

Let us, too, pray for an outpouring of the kind of faith the woman reveals to us. May we be able to recognise the spirit of God in all people, and may we unite in living out God's covenant of love and justice in all that we do.

Opening Prayer

O God, who have prepared for those who love you
good things which no eye can see,
fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love,
so that, loving you in all things and above all things,
we may attain your promises,
which surpass every human desire.

First Reading Isaiah 56: 1.6–7

Thus says the Lord: Have a care for justice, act with integrity, for soon my salvation will come and my integrity be manifest.

Foreigners who have attached themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love his name and be his servants – all who observe the Sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to my covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain. I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their holocausts and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

I enter gently into this time of prayer, and allow my body and mind to settle into stillness as best I can.

I remind myself that I am in the presence of a loving God whose face is shining down upon me.

Once I feel ready, I prayerfully read this prophetic text slowly, with tender care. I allow the truth of its message to find a home in my heart.

As I read and ponder each word, what images or thoughts form in my mind?

How does this prophecy make me feel?

Although written thousands of years ago in a very different time and culture from my own, in what way do these words speak to my faith, and reflect the times in which we are living in now?

I ponder how God's covenant is expressed in my life today.

How is the Lord calling *me* to act with justice and integrity?

I pause ... and I listen ...

When I feel ready, I may like to close my prayer by slowly praying these words from today's psalm:

*O God, be gracious and bless us
and let your face shed its light upon us.*

Gospel Matthew 15: 21–28

Jesus left Gennesaret and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.' But he answered her not a word. And his disciples went and pleaded with him. 'Give her what she wants,' they said, 'because she is shouting after us.' He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.' But the woman had come up and was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord,' she said, 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house-dogs.' She retorted, 'Ah yes, sir; but even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

In preparation for my prayer, I may like to look back over the last week, reflecting on the times when I have been aware of the presence of God in my life, and the moments when I have felt far from God.

Placing these before the Lord, I take a few long, deep breaths.

I then allow my breath to find its own soothing rhythm.

I slowly read the passage several times, until it becomes familiar to me.

Imagining the sights and sounds surrounding this unexpected meeting, I now try to picture the dialogue between the woman, Jesus and his disciples.

Perhaps I place myself as a bystander ... or as one of the key figures.

What do I notice about the emotions and actions of each person?

I may spend time wondering what it felt like for the desperate mother.

Who seems to demonstrate most compassion by their actions?

I ponder what this scene teaches me about the mystery of God's message of love. How is this love found and expressed amongst people of very different faith and belief from my own?

Within my imagination, I sit down with Jesus and share my thoughts and feelings with him as I would with a dear friend.

I close my prayer by saying together with Jesus, *Our Father ...*