

20th Sunday per Annum - A  
Isaiah 56:1, 6-7;  
Romans 11:13-15, 29-32;  
Matthew 15:21-28  
Little Flower - 8/20/23

My Brothers and Sisters,

One theme that runs through all three readings is inclusivity.

Through Isaiah, God tells us his house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples. In his Letter to the Romans, Paul calls himself the apostle to the Gentiles. In today's Gospel, Jesus cures the daughter of a Canaanite woman.

The primary effect of the original sin was alienation from God, others, the world, and ourselves. Jesus came into the world to reconcile us to God, others, the world, and ourselves. However, despite Jesus' death and resurrection, we continue to be alienated.

On one level, everyone in the human family is a child of God because every human being was created by God. If all people are children of God, then all people are brothers and sisters of one another. Although I have not done a DNA test, I am always amazed when people tell me how diverse their DNA is, which I think supports the concept that we are all called to be brothers and sisters of one another.

Alienation from others manifests itself is an *us vs. them* mentality. Last Sunday evening, I was watching a TV show titled "Masters of War: Adolf Hitler." Hitler wanted to conquer the world. At the heart of his world view was his belief in a hierarchy of races and ethnicities. Although Hitler was defeated, there have been many instances of genocide throughout the world since Hitler. Right now, as a nation, we struggle with a rise in hate crimes, especially against Jews. Right now, as a nation, we also struggle with how to deal with migrants and refugees. Today's readings challenge us to see migrants and refugees and the marginalized and persecuted in our own country as our brothers and sisters.

Jesus said that we, the Church, are called to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and leaven in the world. We are called to show the world what all that the world is called to be. In light of today's readings, this means that the Church is called to be a welcoming Church, and Little Flower is called to be a welcoming parish.

At World Youth Day in Portugal, Pope Francis repeatedly said that the Church is for everyone. When Pope Francis was challenged about this during his press conference on his flight home, he stated, "Each person encounters God in his or her own way, within the Church, and the Church is mother and guide (for) each person along his or her own way."

Unfortunately, many people, especially many young people, do not experience the Church as welcoming. We can all think of issues that alienate people from the Church. However, if we say the Church is for everyone, we have to be a welcoming Church. Most of us would agree that Little Flower is a very welcoming, very accepting parish. For the most part, we do not judge. We accept people as they are. We welcome all.

At the same time, although these readings call us to be an inclusive Church, they also challenge all of us. They call us to faith and conversion. Jesus healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman because of her faith. In the reading from Isaiah, the foreigners whom God brings to the holy mountain observe what is right and do what is just.

My brothers and sisters, in today's second reading Paul wrote, "*For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.*" In this passage, Paul is referring to the Jews. Just as God's gifts and call to both Jews and Gentiles are irrevocable, his gifts and call to each of us are also irrevocable. In other words, God never stops loving us or anyone, God never separates Himself from us or anyone, God never stops calling us and everyone to become the-best-version-of-ourselves.