

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

CULTURAL CATARACTS

SUNDAY READINGS:

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Psalms 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Matthew 15:21-28

COMMENTARY

Every culture has its blind spots, and cross-cultural mission helps us to see them.

My way of making a sandwich, inherited from my U.S., white, middle-class cultural upbringing, seemed

shockingly wasteful and excessive to the young Chileans I accompanied. They would take my sandwiches apart and make enough for four people, instead of two.

As a worker priest with a group of self-employed house painters, I expected to go home on Fridays after work, but adjusted to the custom of attending the weekly hours-long meeting on rules and by-laws for our small workers' union. I wondered why there seemed to be very little interest in organizing workers in my homeland.

Contact with other peoples was forced on the nation of Israel many times in the Chosen People's history, and their sacred writers—guided by the Holy Spirit—seem to address their own blind spots, as a consequence. The sacred writers of the school of the prophet Isaiah, returning

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to their homeland after the Babylonian Exile, identified foreigners as fellow beneficiaries of God's love and promises, who even joined in the joyful Temple worship with the Jews.

Jesus is confronted with this wider perspective by the Canaanite woman, descendent of one of the Original Peoples of Palestine, in today's gospel reading from Matthew. The incident is one of several found in the four Gospels where Jesus overcomes his own culture's 'blind spot', finds authentic faith in Gentiles, and acts accordingly—in this case, healing the woman's daughter. (See also Mt 8:5-13; Mt 15:29-31; Lk 17:7-19)

May God help us identify our own hidden prejudices, and discover the life-altering experience of mission among unfamiliar cultures and ways of life, transformed into true disciples of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.



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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Following their return from exile, the inspired authors, disciples of the Isaian tradition, adopt a fresh perspective, recognizing that God's promises of salvation are not only for the faithful few of Israel, but are offered to Gentiles, as well.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

This psalm gives thanks to God for a good harvest, celebrating God's abundant generosity towards all peoples of the world.

Second Reading: Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Despite the rejection of the Gospel by many in Israel, Paul remains convinced that God's gifts to Israel, along with its mission to be a light for the nations, are still in force, and that all Israel will be saved.

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

The issue of the relative positions of Jews and Gentiles in God's plan of salvation is resolved for the early Christians, made up of people from both backgrounds, by the example Jesus offers of a healing of a Canaanite (Gentile) woman's daughter.

Notes and Commentary by by Fr. Bob Mosher,
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