



26. February 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 9: “Responsibility and Docility to God's Will”

Today, in our Lenten journey, we are first presented with a reading from the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 18:1–9). In it, the Lord wants to clarify a false conception that was evidently held by the people of Israel and expressed in erroneous thoughts and proverbs: *“What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?’”* (v. 2).

The Lord makes it clear that He does not want to hear such words in Israel again and that each person is responsible for his or her own actions: *“Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die.”* (v. 4). God then tells us how we should live to please Him, and we can summarize this in verse 9: *“If a man walks in my statutes, and is careful to observe my ordinances—he is righteous, he shall surely live, says the Lord God.”*

This passage offers us important guidance today as well. At times, we may run the risk of giving too much weight to the intergenerational legacies we carry with us. It would be a grave mistake to blame them for all our wrongdoings and use them as an excuse to justify a life contrary to God's Law.

It is true that our environment and family have a profound impact on us. We may bring positive or negative predispositions into our life's journey. If they are negative, we must work hard, with God's grace, to leave behind the bad habits learned in childhood. In any case, we remain responsible for what we do with our lives—or rather, for what we allow our Father and Creator to do with them if we listen to Him.

Today's Gospel recounts the remarkable encounter between Jesus and a Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21–28). Thanks to the testimony of Holy Scripture, we know a Jesus who is constantly moved with compassion for the needs of those who come to Him. On several occasions we read in the Gospel: *“He healed them all”* (cf. Lk 6:19).

In today's passage, a Canaanite woman approaches Him in great distress: *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon.”* (Mt 15:22). Initially, Jesus does not respond at all, even though the woman remains behind Him, crying out in anguish. Then the disciples beg Him to send her away, but the Lord emphasizes: *“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (v. 24). With this

statement, the case could have been “closed,” and the Lord could have continued on His way with His disciples. However, the woman prostrates herself before Him and again implores His help. Jesus continues to be reserved: *“It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”* (v. 26). But then she gives a disarming and irresistible response: *“Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”* (v. 27)

Jesus is moved by these words: *“O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.”* And her daughter was healed at that moment (v. 28).

In this unusual encounter, in which Jesus ends up recognizing the great faith of the Canaanite woman, the usual framework of the Lord's actions is broken. From the Jewish point of view, this woman was a pagan, while Jesus, as the Messiah, was conscious of having been sent to the children of Israel, as He emphasizes at first. However, the woman’s great faith, with which she desperately implores the Lord to free her possessed daughter, opens a door in this situation—one that already allows us to glimpse that the salvation Jesus brings extends to all people. The order is maintained: first the children of Israel, for they are prepared. Nevertheless, God's saving will is universal. Let us recall, in this context, the following passage from the Acts of the Apostles:

“And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly [to the Jews], saying, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.” (Acts 13:46).

Without a doubt, today's Gospel can teach us a great practical lesson. In certain circumstances, God can take us beyond a previously established framework. In the passage we have meditated on, this framework refers to the fact that, in the beginning, the Messiah's mission was limited to the people of Israel, in accordance with God's plan of salvation. However, another circumstance then comes into play that leads to an expansion of that framework. It is important to recognize this in order to respond in the Spirit of the Lord.

Something similar can happen to us on the path of following Christ. Let’s look at an example of how an intervention can break through our usual framework. Suppose we are in the normal course of life, within the family and social sphere. Suddenly, circumstances arise that broaden our horizons, such as a religious vocation. This call will transform the course of our life, even if it has been good up to that point. This new dimension of life, which we had not seen before, knocks on our door like the Canaanite woman. We might respond, “But I am already on God’s path!” However, the voice of

the call will not give us rest until we follow it.

Therefore, from today's readings, let us gather the following flowers to accompany us on our Lenten journey:

- Let us consciously assume responsibility for our lives before God, regardless of whether we have favorable or unfavorable hereditary predispositions.
 - Let us ask the Lord to always broaden our horizons and make us docile, so that we may know how to integrate new and unexpected circumstances into our journey after Him.
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Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/02/25/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2022/03/10/>