

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A) Why are you Catholic?

If someone asked you at work or over dinner this week, "*Why are you Catholic?*"—what would you say?

Would you answer with a story about your family? Would you mention your favorite traditions or this parish? Or would you talk about what the word "**Catholic**" actually means?

The word *Catholic* comes from the Greek *Katholikos*, meaning "*according to the whole*" or "*pertaining to the whole.*" The earliest recorded use of the term comes from Saint Ignatius of Antioch around 110 AD. Writing to the early Christians, Ignatius used "Catholic" to describe the entire body of believers across the globe, united under Christ. Later, the Church sealed this truth in the Nicene Creed, proclaiming that we believe in "*One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.*"

Theologians often speak of Catholicism having two dimensions: an **exterior** dimension and an **interior** dimension.

Exteriorly, to be Catholic means we are universal. We are geographically everywhere, open to every nation, race, culture, and background.

Interiorly, to be Catholic means we possess the *fullness* of the truth. We hold all the means of salvation, all the sacraments, and all the truth—because we have Christ, who is All in All.

Where does this universal mission come from? It runs through the entire story of salvation history.

When God established His covenant with the people of Israel, He did not choose them so they could become an exclusive, isolated club. He chose them to be magnets. They were meant to be a light in the darkness, attracting all nations to the one true God.

In our first reading today, the prophet Isaiah speaks to an Israel that had forgotten this mission—a people who began to feel superior, as if salvation belonged exclusively to them. But God corrects them through the prophet, declaring: "*My house shall be called a house of prayer for ALL peoples.*" And the Psalmist echoes this exact same truth: "*O God, let ALL the nations praise you!*" Not just some. Not just the privileged. *All*.

Saint Paul understood this deeply. In our second reading, Paul calls himself the "*Apostle to the Gentiles.*" To the Jewish mindset of his day, Gentiles were foreigners, outsiders, even clean-versus-unclean castaways. Yet Paul embraces them. Why? Because as he writes to the Romans, God's mercy is intended for **all**.

And that brings us to today's Gospel, which can feel jarring at first glance.

Jesus is in the pagan territory of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman—a complete outsider—approaches Him, begging for help for her tormented daughter. At first, Jesus seems silent, even dismissive, mentioning that He was sent for the lost sheep of Israel and making a reference to not throwing the children's food to the dogs.

Why does Jesus do this? He is testing her faith—and holding up a mirror to His disciples.

Look at her response. She isn't offended. She doesn't walk away. She kneels. She does Him homage, calling Him "Lord," and persists with breathtaking humility: *"Even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from their master's table."*

Jesus marveled at her. Though she was a Gentile who had never been taught the Law, her faith was greater than many in Israel. In that moment, the "house of prayer for all peoples" opened its doors right in front of the disciples' eyes.

I believe that the time predicted by Isaiah is here. We live in the age where *all* have access to the fullness of truth in Jesus Christ—no matter their ethnicity, geographic location, financial status, or past mistakes.

Just as Israel was called to carry the tabernacle and lead the world to God, Christ has commissioned the Catholic Church today to bring His salvation to every corner of the earth.

To be Catholic is not a badge of superiority. It is not a social club. It is a mission.

To be Catholic is to bring Christ to *everyone*—to be magnets of His love and beacons of His truth. Like the Canaanite woman, it means recognizing that Jesus is Lord, doing Him homage, and trusting in His infinite mercy.

So, the next time someone asks you: **Why are you Catholic?**

You can tell them: *"Because I have encountered the fullness of truth in Jesus Christ—and my faith calls me to share that love with ALL the world."*

Si alguien te preguntara esta semana: ¿Por qué eres católico?, ¿qué responderías? ¿Hablarías de tu familia, de esta parroquia o del significado de la palabra Católico?

Católico viene del griego Katholikos, que significa según el todo o universal. No es un club exclusivo ni un título de superioridad; es una misión. Tiene dos dimensiones: exteriormente, la Iglesia está abierta a todas las naciones, razas y culturas. Interiormente, posee la plenitud de la verdad y los sacramentos en Cristo.

Esta es la gran promesa que vemos en las lecturas de hoy. Como nos recuerda Isaías, la casa de Dios es «casa de oración para todos los pueblos». Y San Pablo lo reafirma al llevar el Evangelio a los gentiles.

En el Evangelio, la fe de la mujer cananea una extranjera conmueve el corazón de Jesús. Con profunda humildad, ella nos enseña que el amor de Dios no tiene fronteras. La salvación está al alcance de todos, sin importar nuestro origen o nuestros errores pasados.

Ser católicos significa ser imanes del amor de Cristo y faros de su verdad. La próxima vez que alguien les pregunte por qué son católicos, podrán responder con gozo: Porque he encontrado la plenitud de la verdad en Jesucristo, y mi fe me llama a compartir su amor con todo el mundo.