Sometimes Jesus says the darnedest things. Today he refers to anyone who is not a Jew, as dogs, and that includes most of us. After referring to the Canaanite woman as a dog, she retorts with, "even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the master's table." This exchange is shocking because both parties have crossed the social boundaries that divide them. In the end, Jesus relents and heals the woman's daughter. From this point on Jesus' love and compassion is extended to all, Jew and Gentile alike. This shift in Jesus mission speaks of how God's love is for all.

The theme of who is deserving of God's love, forgiveness, and compassion is at play in all three readings for this weekend. It is timely to hear these themes, given the current social unrest and violence between peoples of different races and religions. Regardless of your race, I am sure that you are in anguish over the renewed hatred and bigotry we have seen this past week. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul's hope is that his fellow Jews would also have a change of heart and embrace the Messiah and his message of Love. Not only do the Jews reject Jesus, but harbor hatred for Jesus' followers as well. They seem to have forgotten that as a covenant people they are to do what is right, regardless of race, and to worship the one true God in the
Temple. Jesus' reoccurring message until the end of his mission on Earth is that he came that we all might be one. (John 17:21) All men and women are to join together in their worship of God. This is to fulfill the prophecy that God's temple is to be a house of prayer for all peoples. (Numbers 15:14-16)

As citizens, we pledge that our country is "one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." This is a holy pledge and one that cannot and should not allow for violence against our brothers and sisters of different faiths, races, or countries of origin. Not only do we look to our leaders to uphold the Constitution, but also each and every patriotic citizen should uphold the values of equality and justice for all. This means that we cannot stand idly by when we see the values of our country trampled. In the words of Rev. Martin Luther Kings Jr., "There comes a time when silence is a betrayal." "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." True patriots do not seek to divide our country; they work to live up to our motto, "e pluribus unum," out of many one.

As Christians, our responsibility does not end with extending rights afforded by the Constitution but includes God's call to love. Love is not just a verbal assent but also a call to action. Love means caring for others in need; welcoming the alien, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and imprisoned, and if necessary laying down one's life for the other. It is a trap to look at those on the street with disdain. It is the same trap that Jesus addressed in the Gospel. To ignore someone in need because they look different, or because they believe in God by another name, or have skin color different than mine, is to treat them like dogs. It is wrong. I often have to remind myself, we are all children of God and that 'There but for the grace of God, go I.' Everything I have and even who I am, is by God's grace. Was I gifted so that I could satisfy my friends, and myself or was I gifted so that I could answer my baptismal call to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the world? God's Kingdom is for all people created by God.

In the spirit of St. Paul, the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. The reconciliation of the world comes through the acceptance of both the gifts and the call and this is nothing less than life from the dead.