

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

CYCLE B

Exodus 24:3-8

Hebrews 9:11-15

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

(An unlit candle, a loaf of bread, a bottle or carafe of wine, a basin, a pitcher of water and a white towel are arranged on a table in the gathering place.)

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit, and the leader invites the community to be aware of God's presence. After a couple of minutes, the community prays as follows.)

Leader: Our bodies are nourished by light and food and drink. Our souls are nourished by light and prayer and service to others. These are symbols of our faith. These are symbols of the way in which we are to live our lives in the light of God.

Lord of all, we gather in your name because you promised to be with us when we do so. You are here because we are the Body of Christ.

All: Be with us mightily that we may bring your life to others.

Leader: Let your light shine within us so that we will bring your good news to all your people.

All: Help us to be Jesus to others.

Leader: Nourish us with your word so that our lives will be beacons of your light in this often darkened world.

All: Help us to be Jesus to others.

Leader: Nourish us with food and drink for body and soul so that we will be strong, for without you, we are weak.

All: Help us to be Jesus to others.

Leader: Let us see in ourselves the gifts that you have given us to lead lives of service to your people.

All: Help us to be Jesus to others.

Leader: We ask you, our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Inspirer, to lead us to be like you – loving all because you are in them – loving all because they are our sisters and brothers – loving all because we strive to be like you.

All: Amen.

COMMENTARY

In our readings this week, we hear Mark's description of the last supper and the great gift that Jesus gave us in his body and blood. Let us also be mindful of John's description of the Last Supper. John's gospel account does not contain the institution of the Eucharist. John's focus is on Jesus' washing the disciples' feet and his command that we do the same; on Jesus' farewell discourse and on Jesus' prayer. Seen together, the Markan and Johannine accounts of the last supper tell us clearly that we are to be the body of Christ given for others just as Jesus gave himself for us.

We, the church, the people of God, are the body of Christ. We are to be eucharistic for others, food for others. When we live our lives eucharistically we are giving and loving and living thankfully in response to Jesus' own self-giving. He is the gift we are meant to share. Living eucharistically, we are open to others; we are there for others.

When we meet someone in need, it is not enough to give them a material gift so that they may continue their lives. We need to give with love. We need to give ourselves, so that they may have life. It is an act of compassion to pray for the sick. It is an act of Christ to visit the sick and give them hope. It is an act of compassion to instruct young people in the ways of the faith. It is an act of Christ to show young people (and others) how we live our lives in Christ. It is an act of compassion

to share our faith. It is an act of Christ to be with the hungry and give them love.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How eucharistic is your life? To what extent does your giving of yourself flow from your response to Christ's giving of himself to you?
- ◆ For what do you give thanks when you receive the body and blood of Christ?
- ◆ Recall a time in your life when you offered help to another but withheld offering yourself?
- ◆ When was there a time in your life when you offered help to another and gave much more by offering yourself?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ When the congregation is dismissed from Eucharist this week with the injunction to go in peace to love and serve the Lord, respond enthusiastically, "Thanks be to God." Notice the exit sign when you leave the church. Let it be a reminder to you to bring the gift you have received to those outside the church walls.
- ◆ The next time you are approached by someone in the street who asks for money, do more than offer some cash, engage the person in some conversation. Offer some word of support.
- ◆ Learn about and organize a Hunger Banquet (www.hungerbanquet.org).

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a few minutes of silent prayer. After a time of quiet, the leader prays as follows.)

Leader: Jesus, you told us that every grain of wheat must die to produce the bread that sustains life. Every grape must be crushed to produce the fruit of the vine. So too our lives. We offer our lives to you and your people in the same way that we offer this bread and wine to each other.

All: Amen.

John 13: 1-15

(The leader then invites members to remove a shoe and sock/stocking. Each member washes the foot of another. Alternately, members approach the basin. Another pours water over the person's hands and dries them.)

(When the ritual is complete, the community joins in singing, "Song of the Body of Christ," The song may be found on the Internet. The session concludes with the sharing of bread and wine.)

