

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

Ezekiel 17:22-24
Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16
2 Corinthians 5:6-10
Mark 4:26-34

Gathering

(An unlit candle, a Bible open to this week's gospel, a packet of seeds, a vessel of water and a pot of soil rest on a small table.)

Prayer

(The candle is lit and members rest in the consciousness of the presence of God. After a time of quiet, the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: It is good to give thanks to the LORD
to sing praise to your name, Most High
to proclaim your kindness at dawn
and your faithfulness throughout the night.

All: Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

Leader: The just one shall flourish like the palm tree,
like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.
They that are planted in the house of the LORD
shall flourish in the courts of our God.

All: Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

Leader: They shall bear fruit even in old age;
vigorous and sturdy shall they be,
declaring how just is the LORD,
my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

All: Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “**What draws you to this gospel?**” “**Where do you resist this gospel?**” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

Reflection

The mystery of how and why a seed sprouts to become what it was created to be is finally, a mystery; no matter how advanced our science has become. We can name the seed or plant, and water it; we can fertilize and expose the seed to sunlight, or the spark that transforms it into a living creation of beauty is beyond our ultimate comprehension. Life is a gift from God. What we do is provide the nurture that the seed requires to grow.

The seed of God's life lies within each of us. The spark of the Spirit animates us all. This spark can grow into a life that flowers and bears much fruit or remain dwarfed and barren. It all depends on how one's life is nourished. Is the life of this son or daughter of God, exposed to the love and acceptance of others? Does he/she hear the Word of God read or spoken? When a person begins to acknowledge the presence of God, he/she begins to live with the eyes of faith. It is then that one begins to appreciate the mystery of life and can come to see more and more clearly God's Spirit in the events of one's own life and the lives of others.

Lest we become caught up in the sense of our power to change others, we need to realize that the transformation is not ours. God is the life source that creates and transforms. Let us be God's allies. Let us till the soil of our own hearts and let others see us doing so. Acknowledging God's power, we humble ourselves to an attitude of gratitude for the life that comes from God.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ Tell of a time when life led you to become more aware of the presence of God with you.
- ◆ How has God used you to help till the soil of another's life into a greater receptiveness to God's word in their life?
- ◆ Recall an ordinary event that became extraordinary because you recognized God's action in the event.

HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?" "How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Set aside ten minutes each day this week for reflection and prayer. Be in touch with some seed that God has planted in your soul that needs to be nurtured into flower.
- ◆ Learn about the work of *Retrouvaille*. It is a program sponsored for those married couples who are struggling with their relationship. Ask to have the information published in your parish bulletin as a service to fellow parishioners. Contact *Retrouvaille* at 800 4702230,
- ◆ Plant some flower or vegetable seeds. Nurture them attentively, letting them teach you a yet deeper appreciation of the mystery of life as God's gift.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: "What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?" "What

do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.

Following this sharing, the community sings, "For the Fruits of This Creation". The song may be found on the Internet. Members then pray:

All: Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

Leader: Lord, help us to recall all the gifts you have given to us. In the moments of joy and times of trouble you have been with us. Allow us the grace to recognize you in ourselves and in others. Continue to gift us with the eyes of faith leading us to generosity of self.

All: Lord, it is good to give thanks to you. Amen!

(Members plant and water some seeds in the pot of soil and let them sprout when they are ready. The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)

