

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

2 Kings 4:42-44
Psalm 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18
Ephesians 4:1-6
John 6: 1-15



Gathering

(An unlit candle, a crucifix and a loaf of freshly baked bread rest on a table covered with a green cloth in the gathering place.)

We reflect this week on the mystery of sharing in the story of the loaves and fishes. Where do you see the miracles of sharing today?

Prayer

(The candle is lit. The leader invites the community to a time of silent communion with God present. After the silence, members join in singing, "Unless A Grain of Wheat". The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: Good and gracious God, each of us is but a single grain in the bread that is the Body of Christ. Yet the bread would not be what it is without each one of us. May we each bring substance and flavor to the feast. Nourished by Christ, may we in turn be good bread for others. In his name, by his Spirit, we pray.

All: Amen.

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. The leader then poses these 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 additional 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



few years back, controversy arose in our parish surrounding this gospel. The pastoral associate wrote a reflection on this gospel that appeared in our bulletin. She said that it was not uncommon at the time of Jesus for people to travel with food since they could not depend on getting home at any specific hour – the buses weren't running then! She suggested that the miracle that occurred might have been, that following the example of Jesus, those who had food, shared it with others, so that, in the end, there was more than enough for everyone. Sadly, one of the most active members of our parish, who couldn't see the *miracle* in that, left the parish because of that reflection.¹

Now whether it was Jesus who caused the loaves and fishes to be multiplied or the people being moved to sharing with strangers, either way, we may speak of *miracle*.

Underneath it all, what is at work here is the provident care of our God that we see throughout the story of God's people. We see it that story of manna in the desert, in the story of Elisha, here in this account and in Jesus' own enduring self-giving in his Eucharistic body and blood.

Sharing – this is the mystery of our lives, God sharing God's self with us and our sharing with one another and those is need from the riches given us by God. Think of your life, of those who have been moved to action on your behalf or for the benefit of others. Their amazing generosity is but a hint of the amazing works of our God.

God feeds his people still. He shares his very life with us in the body

¹Of course, there is other background to this story in the tradition. We find it in the first reading this week. Seen against the background of the Elisha story, we may also understand that the Jesus narrative also serves to root him in the greater tradition of Israel. And in light of the people's acclamation of Jesus at the end of story, it serves to identify him as the expected eschatological prophet, that is, the prophet of final expectation.

and blood of Christ. In receiving the bread of life, we, as members of his body, become bread for the world. Be good bread.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ Name a time when your pooling of resources with others accomplished something no one could have done alone.
- ◆ From whom have you received great generosity in your life?
- ◆ How is God nourishing you at this time of your life?
- ◆ For whom are you good bread?

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 hear Christ saying to us in hearing and sharing his word?" "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 conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Set aside ten minutes a day this week for reflection and prayer. Be in touch with the generosity of God and others in your life over the years. Give God thanks. Pray for those who have shared so much with you.
- ◆ Bring some freshly baked bread to a soup kitchen this week. Stay to help serve.
- ◆ Learn of the work of Bread for the World (www.bread.org; 800-82BREAD) and its Offering of Letters to the Congress to promote the reduction of hunger.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel of the week is re-proclaimed by a member of the community. 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, perhaps even seven, minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members without additional conversation simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally.

Following this sharing, the prayer continues as follows.)

I: Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might.

All: The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

II: The eyes of all look hopefully to you,
and you give them their food in due season;
you open your hand
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

All: The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

I: The Lord is just in all his ways
and holy in all his works.
The Lord is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.

All: The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

Psalm 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18

Leader: Jesus, you are the bread of life, nourish our lives and join with us each day so that we may accomplish more of your plan for us. We know that we are nothing without you. We ask you to be with us so that we may be everything we can be to our brothers and sisters. Bless us today and always.

All: Amen.

(Members join hands to pray the Lord's Prayer. The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)