

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Psalm 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

John 6:24-35

Gathering

(An unlit candle, a Bible open to this week's gospel, some freshly baked bread, a bunch of grapes and a clear glass filled with wine are arranged on a table in the gathering place. Knick-knacks, trinkets and other stuff are arranged on the floor around the table.)

Prayer

(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to a time of quiet attention to the presence of God. After a time of silence, the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: Generous God, Enough is enough! Or is it?
Your love and care are extended way beyond our deserving,
Way beyond our capacity to collect.
You provide us more than enough...
But Lord, so much of life disclaims that enoughness.
We hope for more than we need.
We work for more than we can obtain.
We demand more than we have earned.
We expect more than our share.
At the same time we hear story upon story of people
Truly lacking the enough we consider so basic to our lives...
Too many millions of children lack the basic nutrients
With which to build strong bodies,
As famine and adult power struggles strip their pantries bare.
God, we *do* affirm your enoughness.
Please, now, bestow on those so lacking:
The home, the food, and the peace they need
truly to have enough.
And help us who enjoy a super-abundance to turn our
longing for more into a mission to simplify,



to share, and to follow your lead, that is, to give.
In the name of the one who gave himself,
even Christ Jesus our Lord, we pray.

All: Amen.

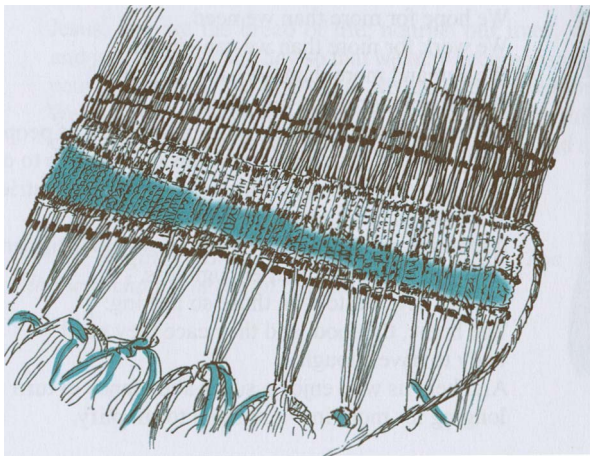
Jack Haberer, Bread for the Preacher, July 2010
www.bread.org

(Members sing, "I Am the Bread of Life." The song may be on the Internet.

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

Saint Augustine tells us, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” I have heard many reflections on Augustine’s words, and when connected to this week’s scriptures, I ask myself: “Am I ever really full?” “What is enough to satisfy me?”

In our first reading we hear the grumblings of the Israelites against Moses and Aaron because they are hungry in the desert. They actually suggest it might have been better to have stayed where they were in slavery in Egypt. Even when presented with food, they ask “What is this?” God hears them and gives them their fill, but is it enough for them?

In John’s gospel, finding Jesus across the sea, the crowd, in seeming innocence asks him, “When did you get here?” Jesus responds by telling them, that they are looking for him because they ate the loaves and were filled.

The same question from the first reading arises, But is it enough for them? The bread, the filling of the stomach is a metaphor for much more, but is spiritual fullness enough for me? Or do I still want stuff; more and more material stuff that seems to fill my life? How much more? Is there ever enough?

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul advises them to live a new way, to put away their former life corrupted through deceitful desires and to put on the new self. Paul speaks to us as well. Does Paul mean let go of stuff that does not really fill us?

In the last lines in the gospel we hear the crowd say, “Sir, give us this bread always.” To them and to us, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.” How satisfied are you to rest in the Lord and be spiritually full?

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ What does having enough mean to you?
- ◆ What stuff do you hold onto that does not fill you?
- ◆ In what way are you hungry or thirsty for the Lord?

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

- ◆ Support the work of Bread for the World (www.bread.org).
- ◆ Add more prayer to your diet. Set aside ten minutes each day this week for this nourishment. Ask the Lord to fill you.
- ◆ Go through your *stuff*. Donate what you do not need to those who do.

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 prays as follows.)

- All: Jesus, divine bread-baker, when we gather to break this bread, we share in its riches in the midst of our poverty, and we remember you as our source of nourishment and life.
- I: You are the one who enters into hungry places of our hearts, wanting to convince us of your deep, abiding love.
- II: You are the one who invites us constantly to chose life, even when our world, and sometimes our own inner places, tastes

of death, pain and weariness.

All: We remember how you gift us with this bread:

I: This bread is strength for us when times are tough.

II: This bread must be broken before it is shared.

All: This bread, when taken within, transforms the quality of our presence.

I: This bread binds us together and tempts us to forgiveness and all the other particles which gather to form community.

II: This bread, which houses the sacred in common earthen gifts, proclaims that the ordinary is but a mask of the holy.

All: We remember what this bread asks of us:

I: To be patient, with our own growth, to recognize the process of our journey, to yield to the nourishment which is waiting for us if we will but come to the table.

II: To be your leaven so that faith can rise in the hearts of others.

All: To be so deeply wedded to compassion that our hearts always save a place for the tears of the world.

To give ourselves fully in the sojourning dimension of our lives, knowing that the manna of God is blessing enough for our need as we yearn for our true home.

And finally, we remember: That our hearts are filled with gratitude for this good gift. Within us all that is holy cries out: Come, Bread of Life, come!

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(Members share the bread and wine. The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)