



hand in hand

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Cycle B

Genesis 2: 18-24

Hebrews: 2: 9-11

Mark 10: 2-16

GATHERING

(An unlit candle and a couple of pairs of gloves arranged to rest hand in hand are set on a table covered with fall foliage.)

God's story begins and ends in relationships. This week we reflect on fulfilling relationships with others, ourselves and God. Last week we spoke about matters of the heart. How did you open your heart to God and others in a new way this past week? *(Members share briefly).*

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to reflect on how they carry out their faith through the seasons of the year, the seasons of their lives. A selection of instrumental music is played as members reflect quietly. After a time of silence, four members lead the community in prayer as follows.)

All: May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.

I: Blessed are you who fear the LORD,
who walk in his ways!

For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;
blessed shall you be, and favored.

All: May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.

II: Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home,
your children like olive plants
around your table.

All: May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.

III: Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

All: May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.

IV: May you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!

All: May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.

Psalm 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

Focus Question

Describe your best friend.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

Commentary

Mutuality is the overriding tone sounded in the reading from Genesis. That the man “clings” to his wife is not suggestive of a domineering relationship, but rather of one that is beneficial and supportive. Enduring relationships take work. They don’t just happen.

As we toil at life’s chores, we risk hurt, but, like the gloves joined, when we work hand in hand, we accomplish much. We are clearing the decaying debris from our yards and parks these days, uncovering the still verdant carpet of grass before it is blanketed in snow. We know that beauty awaits us in the spring. In the autumn of life, however, beauty is beneath the exterior. We wait for the new life that will come from the season of hibernation, and we yearn for resurrection from the death in which we all share. Think of the many family and friends with whom you wait to be reunited on that great day promised by Jesus. Living and loving involve work and pain. We embrace the risks for the sake of fulfilling lives.

The theologian, Aidan Nichols, describes the Trinity as a relationship of love. Instead of calling God by the traditional names, Father, Son and Spirit, Fr. Nichols refers to the three divine persons as the ‘Lover, the Beloved and the Love between them.’ We are, therefore, caught up in love when we draw close to God. From Genesis to the parousia and beyond, God’s story is all about relationship.

True fulfillment comes only in relationship with others, as well as with God. In relationship we lose our anonymity and become part of something larger. When we are drawn outside ourselves we end up discovering who we are in God’s eyes. It is in the *hardness of hearts* that relationships are scuttled. The gospel touches on a relationship that has ended. Despite the commonplace occurrence of divorce, it is still a traumatic experience. Any wounding relationship can cause us to protect our hearts from further harm. But, this protective act also runs the risk of our preventing love and God’s grace from breaking in to transform us into the “glory of God that is the human being fully alive” (St. Ignatius of Antioch).

What relationships have caused you to brick off your heart? Can you risk toppling those walls? To paraphrase the great American southern writer, Flannery O’Connor, let “grace break into your life.”

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How does the word, phrase or image that struck you from this week's scriptures speak to your life or the life of the community, your family or your world these days?
- ◆ How might God be like the best friend that you earlier described?
- ◆ Describe a fulfilling relationship in your life.
- ◆ Share a story of a divorced person who has begun to love again.
- ◆ How have you been tested in your relationship with God?
- ◆ How are you a friend to others?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

(The leader poses the question, "What does God ask of you/us in light of our sharing of life and faith this week?" After a few minutes of reflection, the leader invites conversation in response to the question.)

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Slow down. Let the busyness of the day, the week settle. Listen to what is going on within you. Then try to forget it for now. Notice your breathing. After some minutes, begin to pray repetitively, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me." Having repeated this prayer again and again for several minutes, then simply rest in quiet for the remainder of the time.
- ◆ Collect oral histories of elderly parishioners for placement in your parish library. Record their stories of faith for future generations to be inspired.
- ◆ Help others learn to read so that they may more fully understand the good news. Contact and join Literacy Volunteers at (800) 528-7422 or contact Literacy Volunteers on line at www.famlit.org or www.literacyvolunteers.org

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The community pauses for a few minutes of silent prayer. After a time

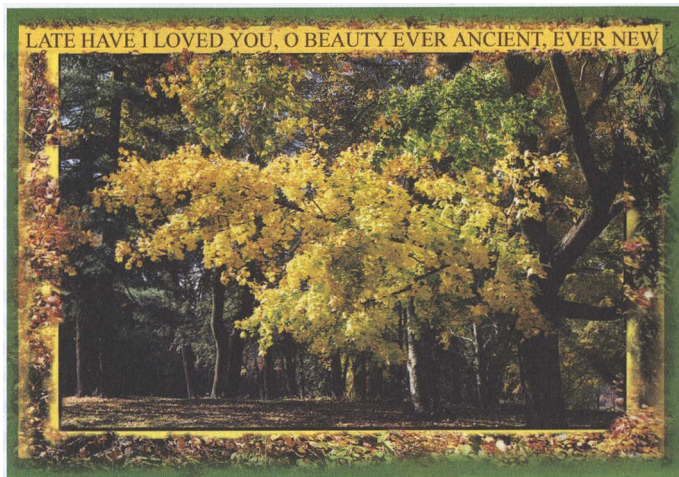
of quiet, members sing, “We Are Called”. The song may be found on Internet: Following the song, the leader prays the following prayer.)

Leader: Too late have we loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new, too late have we loved you.¹

Join us together to learn from one another the great story of salvation. As we journey through the seasons of love towards the house of love, help help us to walk hand in hand. Give us the grace to reach that destination. In Jesus’ name, we pray.

All: Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)



¹Adapted from The Prayer of St. Augustine, **Confessions** 10, 27