



# CardiacALERT

## TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Cycle B

Numbers 11: 25-29

James 5: 1-6

Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48

### GATHERING

*(A picture or statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus rests on a table covered with red cloth. An unlit candle stands next to the image.)*

This week the scripture encourages us to open our hearts and allow Jesus to flow through us and to others. Last week we were challenged to reflect on wisdom versus wickedness. What wise decision did you make this week? *(Members share briefly.)*

### OPENING PRAYER

*(The candle is lit and the community pauses to settle into the presence of God. In the quiet, the leader then continues as follows.)*

Leader: Sisters, brothers, place the fingers of your right hand gently on your carotid artery on the left side of your neck. *(Pause.)* It pulses with each beat of your heart. Close your eyes now and feel the steady pulse. Meditate on how your heart is the source of life. *(Pause.)* Be

in touch with your life. If there is any heaviness of heart, acknowledge it for a moment. (*Pause.*) Then hand it over to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (*Pause.*)

*(After a few minutes of silence, several members lead the community in prayer as follows.)*

All: Take my heart, Lord.

I: Let it beat with life.

All: Take my heart, Lord.

II: Open it to your goodness.

All: Take my heart, Lord.

III: Let your mercy flow through it.

All: Take my heart, Lord.

IV: Make it whole.

*(A selection of instrumental music is played.)*

### **Focus Question**

Describe an experience you may have had or that of someone you know who has suffered a blockage in the heart.

### **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

Today's readings are a good example of what happens when we block our own or someone else's journey to Christ. Even when trying to see things from God's perspective, we sometimes develop a mindset that is quite rigid about what is right. We see this, for example, in Moses' associates. They became very fearful that the gifts of prophesy were being given to some who were not worthy. Jealousy is a blockage that prevents us from being open to God's gifts. The more we judge, the more we block the path of Christ in our lives, just as a blockage in the unhealthy heart causes damage to the tissue around it. Often when a blockage occurs in the human heart, *corollary arteries* develop to allow blood flow around the blockage.

The gospel depicts the followers of Jesus as being concerned about the *outsiders* generating life and healing. Jesus rebukes them. He tells them not to reject anyone who does a mighty deed in his name. His followers are blocking the flow of Jesus' charism.

Is it any surprise that even today, it is often the *corollary people* who accept Jesus' gift and use it in his name? We need to be welcoming and tolerant of *corollary people*. By their openness, they become a new passageway for the witness of his power. When our relationship with Jesus is *all about me*, we can miss his interventions in our lives. When we do, we end up judging and excluding. We tattle, we whine, we pout, we hoard, we gossip, we refuse to forgive. We are intolerant.

Medical literature talks about good cholesterol or HDL (high density lipoprotein). HDL enables the removal of cholesterol from the blood and decreases the deposits in the heart. One lifestyle change that facilitates more HDL is exercise. Exercise in our spiritual lives serves to unblock resistant behaviors that prevent us from accepting Jesus in our own lives and recognizing his action in the lives of others. Being spiritually healthy means consciously allowing Jesus to flow throughout our lives. We need to welcome relationships and be tolerant of new and different people. Tolerance is an exercise that needs to be practiced daily. By frequent practice we dissolve what blocks the flow of the life that Jesus offers us and the world. Let it flow. Let it flow. Let it flow.

## FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ Physically speaking, how heart-healthy a lifestyle are you living?

- ◆ When have your blocked God's intervention in your own life or in others?
- ◆ James challenges our "fattened hearts" thickened by the pursuit of luxury and pleasure. Spiritually speaking, how heart-healthy are you?
- ◆ Relate current examples of how countries pursuing only their own interests and prosperity contribute to making the world a place of conflict.
- ◆ What kind of spiritual exercise might you add to your life to be more heart-healthy before God?
- ◆ How tolerant are you of God acting through non-Christian religions?

## 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.)*

- ◆ Read Vatican Council and papal statements on Islam. You may access these statements on the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs section of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' web site at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/iraqbackground.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/iraqbackground.htm).
- ◆ If you have achieved wealth by *dealings* that have taken advantage of the poor, adopt a poor family and provide appropriate support (e.g. food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, etc.). Your parish or a social services agency in your town can help you identify a family.
- ◆ Call your local branch of the American Heart Association and volunteer to help in some way to help people with heart disease (1-800 -242-8721). Improve your aerobic health by participating in a walk that raises money for heart disease.
- ◆ Learn something about the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola as a way to become more heart-healthy before God. [www.ccel.org/ccel/ignatius/exercises.all.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/ignatius/exercises.all.html)

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(The community assembles around the table. Members place the tips of their fingers on the picture (or statue) of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and pray as follows.)*

### Prayer to the Sacred Heart

All: O Most Holy Heart of Jesus,  
Fountain of every blessing,  
I adore you, I love you  
And with a lively sorrow for my sins,  
I offer you this poor heart of mine.  
Make it humble, patient, pure  
And wholly obedient to your will.

Grant, good Jesus,  
That I may live in you and for you.  
Protect me in the midst of danger;  
Comfort me in my afflictions;  
Give me health of body,  
Assistance in my temporal needs,  
Your blessing on all that I do,  
And the grace of a holy death.

Apostolic Brief, Benedict XV, Dec. 4, 1915; S.P. Ap., Nov. 8, 1934.

*(Removing their fingers from the picture or statue, members briefly touch each other's fingers saying each time, "Amen." Members join in singing, "How Beautiful." The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, members exchange a sign of peace.)*