

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year A

Isaiah 55:1-3
Romans 8:35, 37-39
Matthew 14:13-21

GATHERING

(An unlit candle rests on a cloth-covered table in the gathering place. As members arrive, they place fruit or vegetables they have brought with them on the table. In anticipation of the meeting, the leader reminds members as needed to bring these items with them to the meeting.)

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to open themselves to the generosity of God's love. After some time of silence, the prayer continues as follows.)

- I: Let us bless the source of life that ripens the fruit on the vine.
- II: Let us bless the source of life that brings forth bread from the earth.
- I: Let us acknowledge the source of life for the earth and for nourishment.
- II: Let us seek sustenance for all who inhabit the world.
Amen.

Adapted from *Prayer for the Sabbath. Earth Prayers From Around the World.* HarperCollins, San Francisco. 1991

(Members join in singing, "Table of Plenty; available on the Internet .)

COMMENTARY

Water, grain, wine, milk! Isaiah proclaims that God invites everyone who hungers and thirsts to an abundant feast and without cost. Idealistic? Perhaps not.

God nourishes us with his word and sacraments. It's a feast that never runs out. When we leave the Eucharistic celebration we are meant to leave filled with hope and love. We are taught that we are called to be disciples – to become the bread for others that we have received.

Jesus provided his disciples with an opportunity to feed thousands of people – men, women and children – by blessing a few loaves and fishes. Many believe that the *miracle* that day occurred because the people themselves were moved to share their own food and there was enough for everyone.

This week's scriptures speak about an abundance of food. How appropriate at the height of our growing season when farms and roadside stands overflow with fresh produce. Far too many, however, go hungry because they do not have access to sufficient nourishing food. Enough food is produced to feed everyone in the world, but politics, ideology, and greed prevent it from getting to those who need it.

When Paul told the Romans that nothing could separate them from the love of Christ, he pointed out that neither the trials of our lives, nor the powers of the world can do that, if we don't let them. Let's be disciples who take what we have and share it with others so that everyone is satisfied. Whether we give from our financial resources or prepare food for a family facing a difficult situation, we are sharing as Jesus taught us.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

Name a time when someone's act of kindness, such as bringing a meal or sharing produce from his/her garden touched you.

How do these scriptures challenge you?

How does God's word nourish you these days?

How do you respond to newspaper or television reports of hunger?
In what ways do you try to help those in need?

RESPONSE I. ACTION

Gather fresh fruits and vegetables as a community and bring them to a soup kitchen in your area. Help to prepare and serve the meal. Engage those who come to eat in conversation.

Support the effort to donate free food to those who are hungry. Go to www.hungersite.com and click on the donate button once a day. Learn more about hunger while you are on the site.

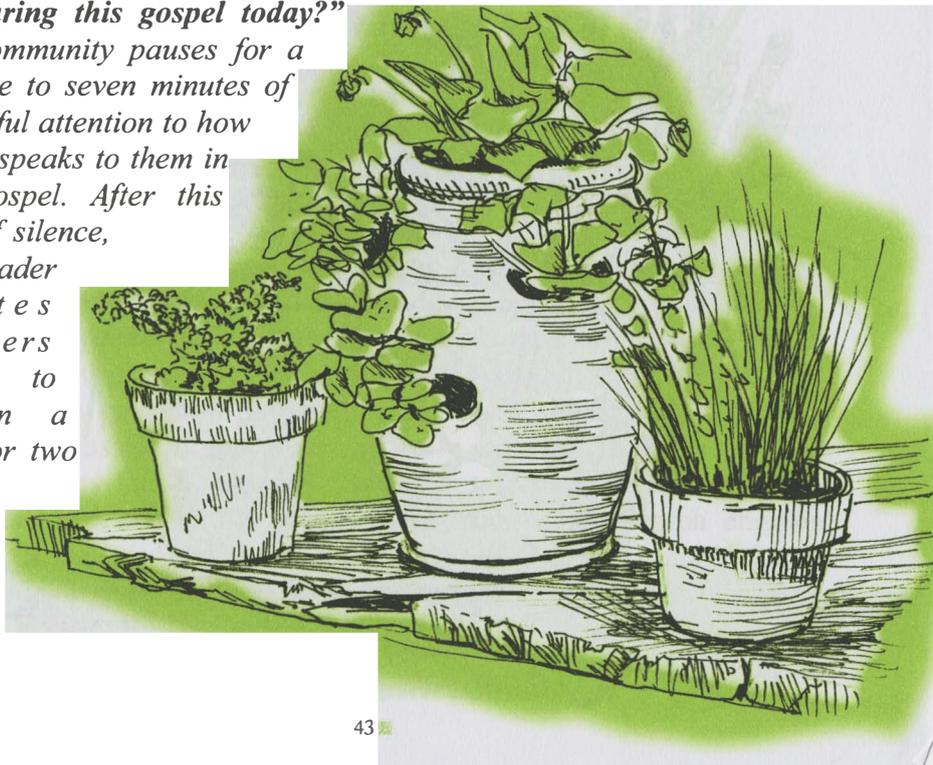
Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Let your prayer be one of quiet. “[L]isten, that you may have life.”

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of quiet. After a minute of silence, the gospel of the week is re-read by a member of the community. Following the reading, the leader poses this question to the members:

“What does Christ say to you/us in hearing this gospel today?”

The community pauses for a full five to seven minutes of prayerful attention to how Christ speaks to them in this gospel. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two or a brief



thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally.

Following this sharing, a selection of instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, two members lead the community in prayer as follows.)

All: God, Grant us generosity of spirit.

I: Let us not think solely of ourselves today.

All: God, Grant us generosity of spirit.

II: Move us to make the effort to take time to touch another's life.

All: God, Grant us generosity of spirit. In Jesus' name, we pray.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)

