

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year C

Deuteronomy 30:10-14
Colossians 1:15-20
Luke 10:25-37

GATHERING

(An unlit candle, a small clear dish of oil, a glass of wine and torn strips of cloth are arranged on a table in the gathering place. The strips of cloth should be wide enough and long enough to be used as blindfolds. A napkin is kept on reserve.)

OPENING PRAYER

(As the session begins, the strips of cloth are distributed, one to each member. The candle is lit. The leader invites the community to be conscious of the presence of God. After a suitable pause, the leader invites the members to use the strip of cloth as a blindfold. When members' eyes are covered, the leader prays as follows.)

Leader: When our eyes are covered, we cannot see light.
When our eyes are covered, we cannot see others.
When our eyes are covered, we cannot see their joy.
When our eyes are covered, we cannot see their pain.
When our eyes are covered, we cannot see Jesus in others.

(The leader pauses.)

Lord Jesus, remove our blindness.
Lord, Jesus, give us sight.

(The leader pauses and then invites members to remove the blindfolds.)

With our eyes open, help us see ourselves as you see us.
With our eyes open, help us see you in each other.
With our eyes open, help us reach out to the neighbor in need.
In your Spirit, we pray.

All: Amen.

(Each member ties a strip of cloth to another member's arm as if it was a bandage. When tying is complete, members join in singing, "Open My Eyes," #403.)

COMMENTARY

Moses reminds us this week that we do not have to cross the sea to understand what God asks of us. It is, he tells us, "something very near ... already in your mouths and in your hearts." Jesus reminds us that what God asks is simple and clear, that we love God above all and that we love our neighbor as ourselves. If loving God is obvious, it's the love of neighbor part that can be a real struggle. The story Jesus tells captures the challenge.

In the gospel story, we see three people encounter the man who was beaten, robbed and stripped of his clothing. The first two, men of the temple, pass him by. The third one, a Samaritan, stops to help. Probably all three were on important journeys. The first two, we are told, were heading down the road from Jerusalem toward Jericho, a town about 17 miles away and over three thousand feet below Jerusalem. Perhaps they were heading home from their assignments in the temple. Were they in too much of a hurry? Were they afraid to stop? Who knows why they didn't stop? The point is they didn't! The despised Samaritan did stop and Jesus tells us why he stopped. He stopped because he was moved by simple human compassion. One can easily imagine him saying to himself, "What will happen to this fellow if I don't stop to help him?"

The Samaritan's compassion was the difference that saved the beaten man's life. God was close in that moment. His command was "very near"; it was in the Samaritan's mouth and in his heart. The Samaritan poured wine on the wounds to cleanse them, oil on the wounds to soften

them and then bound them up.

This is what God does for all of us. Imagine the wine as Jesus cleansing us of our sins. Imagine the oil as the Holy Spirit softening our wounded hearts so we are open to those around us. Imagine the bandage cloth as the action of the Father holding our lives together. This is God's command: that we do for each other what God, Father, Son and Spirit, do for us.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ What thoughts run through your mind when you see a person standing outside a broken down car on the road?
- ◆ If you have ever been in the situation of either the man who was robbed or the Samaritan who helped, what was that like?
- ◆ What does loving God totally mean for you?
- ◆ What has the command to love your neighbor as yourself asked of you lately?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. In God's presence ask yourself, "Who is the neighbor I am ignoring?" Discern how God might be leading you to reach out to that person in some appropriate way. Act in response.
- ◆ Help the neighbor far away by supporting the work of Catholic Relief Services. Go to their website (www.crs.org) to learn how you might help.
- ◆ Reach out to neighbors close to home. Contact Catholic Charities in your diocese for ways to connect to local programs. Many dioceses offer support to recent refugee immigrants. Look for and opportunity to be a part of that outreach.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of quiet. After a minute of silence, the gospel for the week is re-read by a member of the community. Following the reading, the leader poses this question to the community: "What does Christ say to you/us in your 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. When this sharing is complete, some instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, the prayer continues as follows.)

Each member removes the bandage that they tied on another's arm at the opening prayer. When the bandages are removed, the prayer continues as follows. To each of the the invocations that follow, members respond, "Free us to see and to be you for others."

Leader: Lord Jesus, help us to see that the things in our lives that bind us and blind us can be used for good in the world –

When busyness keeps us running down the road,
insensitive to those around us –

When narrow worldly focus prevents us from looking
at those in need around us –

(The leader passes the glass of wine, along with the napkin, inviting members to take a sip of wine. When the wine has been passed, the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: When selfishness blinds us to the plight of others –

When fear holds us back, help us to see and feel the
greater fear in others that need us –

(The leader takes up the oil and marks the sign of the cross on the closest member. That member follows suit and so on until all are signed

with the oil. When all are anointed, the prayer concludes as follows.)

All: Christ has no body now but yours and mine.
No hands, no feet on earth but yours and mine.
Yours and mine are the eyes through which He looks
Christ has no body now on earth but ours.

(An adapted version of a prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Avila)

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)

