

The **MATRIX** that *Heals*

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Cycle A

Zephaniah 2:3,3:12-13

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12

GATHERING

(An unlit candle, a crucifix, some rolled bandages and band-aids rest on a table covered with red cloth.)

This week we ponder God's care for the poor, the lonely and the wounded of the world and our role as healer in the church and the world. Last week we reflected on lowly Galilee as a place of grace. How did you bring Christ's light to some place or circumstance in your world this past week? *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to quiet themselves in God's presence. After some minutes of silence, the community sings, "Open Our Eyes." The song may be found on the Internet. Following the song, members pray, "Open our eyes, Lord, open our hearts" to each of the invocations named in rotation by members of the community.)

Members: To those who are broken hearted...
 To the victims of violence and abuse...
 To those full of sorrow...

To those suffering illness...
To the plight of the poor...
To those who seek justice...
To those trapped by addiction...
To the innocent children...
To those who have harmed us...
To the lost and forgotten...
To those who seek peace...

Focus Question

Recall a time when you were physically, emotionally or spiritually injured.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Commentary

Healing is a gradual process. We first shudder when the wound is inflicted on us. Our body responds with a predictable series of events that includes a rush of blood to the wound, the surge of hormones that promote the arrival of white blood cells and additional fuel. This results in swelling, pain and inflammation before healing begins. One cell at a time is replaced until a matrix of scar tissue is completed. For small cuts or injuries this can happen in a day and for large wounds it can take months or years. The human body is wired for life. So when it is hurt, all of its processes are put on alert so that life can be maintained.

When we are hurt we are put in touch with our vulnerability; we are humbled. Zephaniah's words exalt the humble who, in touch with their lowliness, are open to their need for God.

When we are injured in heart and in soul we often are more attuned to our need to rely on God and God's love within each other. As members of the Christian community, we become the healing cells that surround the afflicted so that healing can progress. We are the salve that diminishes the inflammation and pain. We fill the void, we listen, we comfort. We become, with Christ's love, the matrix that heals. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus reminds us that God is with those in pain. He acknowledges the reality of woundedness and powerlessness but assures us that the downtrodden, the afflicted and violated will be satisfied. He pledges that God is at work reconciling all things in himself.

When we are wounded, we have heightened sensitivity to anything that might make things worse. We may avoid the place or situation where the hurt took place. We protect the wound. We are sensitive to it being touched. Our sensitivity may explode into anger and those who love us may also feel this anger. When the wound is not just physical, but personal, especially when inflicted by another, if we become stuck in anger, we may prevent reconciliation and healing. There is a time for the expression of righteous indignation and anger, but we also need to be able to move on. We recognize the pain of the injury and at the same time embrace Jesus so that healing can begin. As St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: not many of you were wise by human standards. Jesus Christ is the "wisdom from God." It is not for us to be judgmental. We need to be humble, to rely on Jesus, and be sustained by his words that those who seek righteousness will be satisfied.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How readily do you see yourself as one of the humble and lowly of the earth?
- ◆ Recall a time when you were wounded in body or soul. Share something of the process and time that it took for healing to take place.
- ◆ When have you found yourself needing to listen to someone angry with God or wounded by the church? How did you respond?
- ◆ When has healing taken a long time?
- ◆ What have you learned from those who are weak, lowly, despised and count for nothing?
- ◆ When has your own weakness opened you to your dependence on God?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Be in touch with some situation of woundedness or pain in your parish setting. Reach out in some way to be an agent for healing.

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Be in touch with those parts of your life where you may be weak, wounded or in pain. Acknowledge your dependence on God.
- ◆ Be in solidarity with the *weak of the world*. Learn about the multiple ways you can connect with Ugandan women who make beautiful beads from recycled paper at www.beadforlife.com. Choose one way to support their efforts.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader calls the community to silence. A selection of instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, members pray as follows.)

Leader: Blessed are the poor in spirit.

All: For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Leader: Blessed are they who mourn.

All: For they will be comforted.

Leader: Blessed are the meek.

All: For they will inherit the land.

Leader: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

All: For they will be satisfied.

Leader: Blessed are the merciful.

All: For they will be shown mercy.

Leader: Blessed are the clean of heart.

All: For they will see God.

Leader: Blessed are the peacemakers.

All: For they will be called children of God.

Leader: Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

All: For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Leader: Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.

All: Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

Leader: Open our eyes, Lord, that we may see as you see. Open our hearts, Lord, to love like you. Draw us, Lord, to reach out to the humble of the earth, to the weak, the lowly and despised of the world, to those who count for nothing. May you reign in our hearts and in our world forever.

All: Amen.

(The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)

The word "MATRIX" is displayed in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are rendered in a light gray color with a subtle 3D embossed effect, giving them a metallic or stone-like appearance. The text is centered horizontally and occupies a significant portion of the lower half of the page.