



# COMMITMENT

## EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### CYCLE B

Hosea 2: 16b, 17b, 21-22

2 Corinthians 3: 1b-6

Mark 2: 18-22

### GATHERING

*(An open bible, an unlit candle, and some fresh flowers rest on a cloth-covered table in the gathering place.)*

This week we focus on the personal change that is entailed in being faithful disciples of Christ. We looked at giving and receiving care from members of our small Christian community at last week's gathering. *(Members share briefly with their prayer partner from last week about the experience of praying for their partner during the week.)*

### OPENING PRAYER:

*(The leader lights the candle and prays, "Lord Jesus, may your light and your word be present in our midst and in our hearts during this gathering." The community pauses for some extended silent prayer.)*

Leader: God of light, your word guides our lives.

All: Be present to us; make us faithful, committed disciples.

Leader: God, your word is surety and challenge for us.

All: Be present to us; make us faithful, committed disciples.

Leader: God, your word is living and active among us.

All: Be present to us; make us faithful, committed disciples.

Leader: Living Word of God, you come to us in many forms. We hear it spoken and sung. You are consoling and piercing; peaceful and dynamic. We trust your word, Jesus Christ, word made flesh. Help us to speak and sing your word as we grow and become more fully your disciples. In your name, we pray.

All: Amen.

Leader: God of light, your word guides our lives.

*(Members join in singing, "How Can I Keep From Singing?". The song may be found on the Internet. Following the song, the leader prays.)*

Leader: May we always speak and sing of God's fidelity.

All: Amen.

## **Focus Question**

Reflect on a significant commitment you have made.

## **SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION**

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

## Commentary

During the Sundays in Ordinary Time we have focused our attention on various aspects of discipleship. In our scripture reflections in recent weeks, we have looked at our capacity to listen to God, our response to suffering, our daring to show mercy and our ability to give and receive care and compassion. In very practical ways, these attitudes and behaviors are integral to discipleship.

Now, in this last week before Lent, the scriptures invite us to consider what it is that shapes us into disciples of Christ. A response comes from scripture: radical change in our lives, an intimate and faithful relationship to God and daily living with the mind and heart of Christ.

We do not initiate discipleship and commitment to God. It is God who makes the first move and beckons us to the desert where we can learn to know God. God seeks us out, promising divine fidelity if we but open ourselves to a covenant relationship.

In any committed relationship, every aspect of a person's life is affected. This is all the more true in our relationship with God and Christ. Every aspect of our lives experiences some degree of change when we say *yes* to this invitation.

It was obvious to his followers that Jesus was here to bring about a new experience of living and loving:

John's disciples fast; Jesus' do not.

John preached repentance; Jesus proclaims God's reign.

John's disciples uphold time-honored traditions; Jesus calls for fidelity to God's presence in a new age.

Jesus brought about change, new ways of thinking and acting, while remaining faithful and committed to God.

Full commitment to Jesus brings about change in the quality and character of our lives. Like the wineskins and wine in the gospel parable, discipleship is not merely adding something new to our settled lives. Discipleship, rather, is a full transformation of our lives and ways of thinking and acting. God's faithfulness endures.

As with marriage, the discipleship commitment to Christ will bring daily changes and growth to our person and to our community. The Lenten days ahead are

graced days for us disciples. God will draw us into the desert to deepen our relationship and strengthen our discipleship.

The upcoming season of Lent is yet another opportunity for us to renew our commitment to Christ and to be living witnesses to him and to our faithful God.

## 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 faithful are you to commitments you have made?
- ◆ When has God's fidelity to you been most real?
- ◆ What is your experience of breaking a commitment?
- ◆ As a disciple of Christ, what is a difficult commitment for you to keep?
- ◆ What change in the church, during your lifetime or since Vatican II, has been most difficult or most life-giving for you?

## 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.)*

- ◆ Conserve water and water quality. Plan now to reduce the size of your lawn this year by planting some areas with hardier, drought resistant grasses, and with native plants, shrubs or trees. Install drip irrigation hoses or timed sprinklers and use mulch to hold water in the soil. Reduce the use of fertilizer and pesticides. Leave clippings on lawn after mowing to return nitrogen to the soil.
- ◆ Deserts lack water. This natural resource is becoming limited in supply and undrinkable in many places on our planet. Take a step to address this situation. Visit [www.thewaterproject.com](http://www.thewaterproject.com) or [www.unesco.org/water](http://www.unesco.org/water).

- ◆ Make a difference in the world as you deepen your commitment to discipleship. Read the newspapers this week with an eye to local justice issues. Take action on one of them.

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(An selection of fiinstrumental is played.)*

Leader: Our sharing has come from our attentiveness to the word of God. The phrases of these rich readings linger with us. We recall God's word:

I will lead you into the desert. . . I will espouse you to me in right and in justice. . . and in fidelity. *(Pause.)*

You are our letter written on our hearts. *(Pause.)*

You are ministers of a new covenant. *(Pause.)*

You are disciples of Jesus Christ for a new time, like new wine in new skins. *(Pause.)*

All: We are ready to go into the desert with our faithful God.  
We are eager to go forth into the renewing season of Lent.  
We are confirmed in God's word and in Jesus Christ and we commit ourselves to the faith journey before us.

*(Each member approaches the open bible, lays hands on the sacred word and, in silence, asks for God's guidance to live as a faithful disciple. When all have approached the bible, the members offer each other a sign of peace.)*