



## THE FEAST OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

### CYCLE A

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 14b-16a

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

John 6:51-58

### GATHERING

*(Several types of fresh bread are arranged in the gathering place, e.g. rye, tortilla, sourdough, challah, nutbread. A carafe of wine and a glass for each member are also arranged on the table.)*

We reflect this week on Christ's nourishing empowering presence to us in Eucharist. Last week we celebrated the Trinity, the divine community of love. What contribution did you make this past week to building up God's beloved community. *(Members share briefly.)*

### OPENING PRAYER

*(As the session begins the facilitator mentions types of bread that are present.)*

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Leader: Let us pray.

All: O Lord, Jesus Christ, bread of angels, living bread unto eternal life, bless this bread as thou didst bless the five loaves in the wilderness; that all who eat it with reverence may through it attain the corporal and spiritual health they desire. Who lives and reigns eternally. Amen.

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## Focus Question

When was the last time you felt really hungry?

## SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

### Commentary

A middle-aged man living in Hartford, CT went into the hospital for an angioplasty, and came out of the hospital with a heart transplant instead. He was given the heart of a 22 year old woman who had just died and who had been willing to share her life with him. This heart transplant went on to change the man's life and the life of his family. It also changed the life of the neighborhood in which he worked because of the new energy he experienced. Who knows where the rest of the ripples are flowing because of this generous act of love by one young woman and her family!

Today's feast is not unlike the celebration of getting a heart transplant. Through the life-blood of Christ we are transformed and energized to live out the message of the gospel.

In this week's scripture, two images of bread are laid before us to feast upon. The first is *manna*. It appeared mysteriously to feed the Israelites who were hungering for physical sustenance in the desert. This bread went beyond satisfying their physical hunger. It was also a tangible sign

that Yahweh was still with his people. Even though they had been grumbling and complaining about their desert pilgrimage, God was faithful to his covenant with them both physically and spiritually. *We* still need *manna* today, and God has continued his faithfulness to us in the gift of the body and blood of Christ.

In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that he is indeed "the living bread". Not just once does Jesus say this. He repeats it over and over. He is "the living bread...for the life of the world." Up to *seven* times he says he is giving us himself for life! Do we get it? Do we really get it? Are we acting as *alive* members of the body of Christ?

We come together as members of small Christian communities all around the world, sharing in the very same *living* bread. In our small Christian communities, where we break apart the bread of the word, we feed on the loaf of truth that the scripture reveals to us with the promise of life, life everlasting. Whether we are Asian, African, Hispanic, European, or American we are each members of Christ's body and we each share the same *cup*. As it is around the table, so may it be around the world, all equal members of the Body. May no one be a second class citizen, no one a stranger in the Body.

In her book, **Ordinary Times**, Nancy Mairs expresses her need for the Eucharist as if she were "fainting from hypoglycemia of the soul."<sup>1</sup> It is this very same feeling of faint-heartedness that we may experience in days of fear and uncertainty. When wanton evil confronts us, or challenging decisions are called for, coming together around the altar in the Eucharist helps us find support and courage. The Eucharist, the *living* bread is indeed sustaining bread in the extra-ordinary, as well as in the ordinary days of life.

## FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ What sustains you when times get rough?
- ◆ What kind of bread are you?

1. Nancy Mairs, **Ordinary Times**, Cycles in Marriage, Faith and Renewal. Beacon Press, Boston. 1993. **Ordinary Times** recounts Nancy's path from Congregational to Episcopal to Roman Catholic in a straightforward, Erma Bombeck style. She reveals a deep faith struggle with honesty and fresh insights.

- ◆ How are you manna to others in daily life?
- ◆ Share a time when the Eucharist was a special experience of *aliveness* for you?

## RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ As a community view and discuss the video, **The Roman Catholic Mass Today**. Available from Liturgical Training Publications, 1-800-933-1800.
- ◆ Bake some bread together as a group and then take it to your local food pantry or soup kitchen.
- ◆ Become a heart transplant advocate. Sign up to be a donor for blood or organs through the Apheresis Donation Program of your local Red Cross.
- ◆ Share the gifts of your life by volunteering as a Big Brother or Big Sister in your area. For more information go to [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org) or call nationally (215) 567-7000 for information.

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(The community joins in singing "I Received the Living God." The song may be found on the Internet. Several members of the community pray as follows.)*

### **The Imitation of Christ**

- I: "Look! I stand before you poor and naked, asking your grace and imploring your mercy.
- II: Feed me, for I am hungry.
- III: In flame my coldness with the fire of your love.

- IV: Illuminate my blindness with the light of your presence.
- V: Make all that leads me from you not worth thinking about.
- VI: Make me forget it all.
- VII: Lift up my heart to you in heaven, and let me not wander aimlessly about the world.
- VIII: From now on, you will be my only delight, for you alone are my food and drink, my love and joy, my sweetness and my whole good.”

A Prayer of Thomas À. Kempfi , Every Eye Beholds You,  
A World Treasury of Prayer, Harcourt Brace and Co.

*(Members join hands to pray the Lord's Prayer. The bread and wine is shared by all.)*

