



## FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Cycle B

Job 7:1-4, 6-7

1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

Mark 1:29-39

### GATHERING

*(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel and an alarm clock rest on a table covered with a deep blue cloth. The alarm clock is set to go off at some point in the middle of the community's conversations about this week's scriptures. When the alarm goes off, the leader announces "Time Out," and the community pauses for two minutes of silence before resuming the conversation.)*

This week our Scriptures challenge us to reflect upon how we renew ourselves, restore vitality and hope in the midst of the burdens of our lives. Last week we reflected on both hearing and speaking the prophetic word. When did you have the courage to *speak for God* this past week? *(Members share briefly.)*

### OPENING PRAYER

*The candle is lit. The community dwells in quiet attention to movement of God's Spirit in their midst. After some minutes the leader prays the invocation that follows. To each invocation members respond, "God of life, be our hope."*

Leader: When fear arises in us and we don't believe that we can go on...  
When the busyness and schedules of our daily lives press upon  
us and we tend to forget about you...  
When we doubt your presence in the pain and suffering of life...  
When we lose sight of the truth that we are channels of your  
love...  
When emptiness and loneliness keep us from trusting in your  
word...

*(A selection of instrumental music is played.)*

### Focus Question

When lately have you struggled with the *woes* of life?

## 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

There's a definite sense of *woe* in our readings this week. Job, Paul, and even Jesus speak to us of the burdens of life. Each one of them dealt with a weight peculiarly his own, but universal none the less. How often is our inner peace altered by the ordinary ups and downs of life, to say nothing of the catastrophes that can beset us! We only have to reflect on the economic turmoil of the times to get in touch with the destabilizing dimensions of our lives. How are you handling these stresses?

Poor Job. We can almost hear him cry out, "Enough already!" But God listened patiently to him through all of his trials and tribulations and ultimately Job encountered the living God amidst the chaos of his life. It was in the time he spent in patient waiting that he found hope and deepened his relationship with God. All of us are called to cultivate that relationship in our lives, where hope can be found, then nurtured.

Our other two readings move us beyond mere relationship to intimacy with God. Recall that Paul's *melt down* experience, his conversion on the road to Damascus, required him to take *time out*. It took him a few years to come to grips with the awesome mystery that Christ lives in each of us! Ultimately, Paul realized his stewardship role, that of preaching the good news. It became his burden, even his *woe*. But because he was grounded through his intimacy with God, he could become "all things to all people." As members of the body of Christ we, too, have been given that stewardship role. Where and how do you find and nourish the intimacy needed to fulfill your role?

Like Job and Paul, Jesus dealt with a burden, that of his ministry, where he was beset by the constant clambering of the people for healing and wholeness. It is in his response that we find the ultimate example of how we can deal with the *woes* of life. Jesus went off to a quiet place where he prayed. He knew his need could only be satisfied by strengthening his intimacy with his Abba in *time out*. What about us? Do we really recognize what's needed for us to deal with the *woes* of life? Perhaps spirituality is an underestimated virtue in our lives. Taking *time out* isn't a luxury. For Job, Paul, Jesus it made all the difference in the world. For us, too, it is a necessity.

## FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How do you restore your balance when life has been stressful?
- ◆ When was there a time that God nudged you to take *time out*? How did you respond?
- ◆ In what ways might God be calling you to a deeper intimacy?
- ◆ When have you waited patiently for God to respond to your suffering or other stressful situations?
- ◆ When have you cried out to God, "Enough already!"
- ◆ How much time did you take in the past week to deepen your relationship with God?

## RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Set aside fifteen minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Be in touch with the burdensome things in your life. Entrust them to God.
- ◆ Be in touch with someone you know who is weighed down with the burden of life. Invite the person to your home for dinner or offer some other expression of support.
- ◆ Read **The Seven Story Mountain**, by Thomas Merton to gain an understanding of the struggles of his life and how he found God.

## CLOSING PRAYER AND SENDING FORTH

*(The leader invites the community to some time of silent reflection. After a few minutes all join in singing, "Your Hands O Lord in Days of Old." The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, the community prays as follows.)*

All: God of tender mercy, you hear our cries when we are frustrated and weary. Send us your spirit of refreshment to lift our hearts and calm our anxieties. When we lack the strength to continue giving of ourselves, renew us with your energy. When we feel that we are alone and lost, be our companion and guide. Help us to know when are you inviting us to step aside and be renewed in your love. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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