



## THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

### CYCLE B

Daniel 12:1-3

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Mark 13:24-32

### GATHERING

*(An assortment of gourds and squash is placed on a table in the center of the gathering space, and next to them, a dish of their seeds.)*

Last week we reflected on the nature of trusting and giving. Do we give from our surplus or do we give from our want? As the community gathers, members share with one another how they have attempted to answer this question in the past week.

### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Unless the seed falls to earth and dies it remains just a seed. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.

**All:** If we love our life we will lose it. But if we lose our life in this world, we will have life eternal.

### Focus Question

When do you find it difficult giving up being in control?

## SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

### Commentary

The mystery of the Kingdom of God is a reality at once present and future, and at once individual and universal. We believe that the fulfillment of God's Kingdom will mark the consummation of history. And we also believe that through Jesus' death and resurrection the Kingdom of God is made available to each of us in the present.

As humanity waits for the final coming of God, how do we also prepare ourselves to be received into the Kingdom in the present? Jesus said that, like the seed, we must die to ourselves before we are able to receive God in our lives. To do this we must first recognize how we over-identify with ourselves. For example, we must examine how attached we are to our work and our lifestyle, and to our beliefs, opinions, and feelings. Holding on to these attachments often prevents us from receiving God. We must instead deny ourselves, become empty, before we can be filled with the spirit of God.

We tend, however, to want to do things our way, to be in control, to make sense of life from our own perspective. However, God reveals to us that such preoccupation only supports the false self. How do we, then, overcome our fear of losing that which brings us such comfort, and find a deeper, truer sense of self in union with God? One way is by practicing letting go of all to which we are attached through the exercise of contemplative prayer. By spending time being still and losing ourselves in that moment of quiet, we may become more aware of the presence of God that is always there, but which often goes unnoticed due to our self-absorption and daily distractions.

Another way of emptying ourselves is through our dedication to serving others, especially those who are very different from us, those who have been alienated from mainstream society. Jesus challenges us to love not only those who love us in return. We must learn to love our enemy, the stranger, the one whose love of which we are unsure. If we can take the risk of losing ourselves in that kind of love, we will become empty and ready to be filled with the love of God.

## FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

*(The community pauses in silence for several minutes to ponder the scriptures and the questions which follow.)*

1. Speak of a time when you were put in a situation where you had to trust someone you did not know.
2. Recall an occasion when you let go only to discover that God was near, even at the door.
3. Name some characteristic of yourself with which you strongly identify. Share what it might feel like if you detached yourself from that identity.

## RESPONSE IN ACTION

Suggestions:

1. Volunteer with the poor, the homeless, or any institution serving those in need. In your area, check the volunteer opportunities for the homeless shelter, soup kitchen, thrift stores, and nursing homes. A good place to start is your local Saint Vincent de Paul. Go to [www.ssvdpusa.org](http://www.ssvdpusa.org) for the location of council sites in your area.
2. Go through your closets to find clothing you have not worn this past year. Prepare it for donation to a shelter in your area, such as Saint Vincent de Paul Society, the Salvation Army or Goodwill.
3. Gather household items, appliances, furniture, etcetera that are not being used. Prepare them to be given to a shelter in your area.
4. Set aside half an hour each day this week for reflection and prayer. For the first ten minutes, notice the stuff in your life that you are clinging to. Open yourself prayerfully to the sense that you are being held in God's hands. For the rest of the time, reflect and pray on ways you might be of service.

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(The community sits silently, with eyes closed, for a few minutes in the presence of God. the leader then asks the group to hold hands and say "The Lord's Prayer". The session ends by playing the recording: "Prepare Ye (The Way of the Lord)" from the Godspell motion picture soundtrack, or other appropriate music.*

*Before this session concludes, everyone is requested to bring a Bible to next week's session. Three people are asked to volunteer to bring either a crown, a cape or a scepter for the proclamation of next week's gospel.)*

