



SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE C

Jeremiah 17:5-8
I Corinthians 15:12, 16-20
Luke 6:17, 20-26

GATHERING

(A lighted candle and a bible open to this week's gospel rest on a table in the midst of the gathering place. As members arrive, the facilitator invites people to take out their credit cards and place them on the table around the bible and candle.)

This week the scriptures challenge us to find our security above all in God.
(As the session begins, the community takes some time to share how they acted to promote God's reign in this past week.)

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Let us be mindful that we are in God's presence.

(The community pauses for several minutes of silence. Some quiet music plays in the background.)

If You Have Nothing

Member: The gesture of a gift is adequate.
If you have nothing; laurel leaf or bay,

No flower, no seed, no apple gathered late,
Do not in desperation lay
the beauty of your tears upon the clay.

No gift is proper to a Deity;
No fruit is worthy, for such power to bless.
If you have nothing, gather back your sigh,
And with your hands held high, your heart held high,
Lift up your emptiness.

Siegfried, Regina and Morneau, Robert, ed., *Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers*, (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1989), p. 91. Reprinted with permission of Sheed & Ward.

(The facilitator invites the members to extend their hands for a few moments of silent prayer. The facilitator then offers a few words of prayer in the name of the community.)

Focus Question

How did you feel when you were asked to put credit cards on the table?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Commentary

“The American Express Card: Don’t leave home without it.” “Master Card: We’re everywhere you want to be.” Security, personal and social: we depend on it. But to what extent? Where is our security most rooted?

Cursing and blessing, blessing and woe: the images of these two sets of alternatives frame the scriptures for this week’s liturgy. Spanning the reach from the Old to the New Testament, what is at stake, first for Jeremiah, and later for Jesus, is essentially the same. The ancient prophet poses his alternatives as between trust in human beings or trust in the Lord. Jesus presents the choices as between self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency on the one hand or, an openness to, and embracing of, the reign of God on the other.

Jeremiah paints the stunningly contrasting pictures of a barren bush in the

desert, experiencing no change of season and a tree planted by water, stretching its roots to the stream, staying green and bearing fruit even in heat and drought. These sharply drawn images counsel us to be conscious of the results of rooting our lives in mere human self-sufficiency. They draw us to acknowledge ever more profoundly that we are embedded and sustained by a gracious mystery that encompasses us all.

And this mystery is not totally unknown to us. It has come to expression for our sakes in Christ preached as raised from the dead. Paul, too, in his own way, draws the contrasts projected by Jeremiah and Jesus. For Paul, the contrasting alternatives are expressed as rooting one's hopes in this life alone or in the resurrection promised to those grafted in Christ, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Christ, rooted in God, we rooted in Christ: explicitly and implicitly, tree imagery abounds in these scriptures. But these are not just trees lovely to behold. They are trees which bear fruit. God's reign is God's gift to us, but we are called to support its realization in our midst. Jesus' words to the people make the call concrete. God's concern for those without the good things needed for a decent human life is clear. In embracing God's reign ourselves, we are called to be about God's work of securing conditions of adequate human living for all.

This, then, is the pattern for the Christian life: Sink roots in God. Bloom where you are planted. Bear fruit in Christ.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

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

1. How much financial security is enough security for you?
2. Where are you situated these days: in the desert, or by the stream?
3. How deep are your roots in the mystery of God?
4. How many friends do you have among the materially poor? How do they enrich you? What do you learn from them about security?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

Leader: In the light of our sharing of life and faith over the scripture for this week's liturgy, what does God ask of you, personally; what does God ask of us as a community? *(After an extended pause the leader invites responses from the community.)*

1. Seek out an opportunity to be of service to those in need in your community by visiting a shelter in your area. Spend time not just with a task, but also with people in a way that lends personal support.
2. Take advantage of networking with a small church community in Africa. Sr. Rita Ishengoma of Geita Diocese, Tanzania, would gladly act as contact person for small church communities that would like to twin with small communities in her area. You may contact her as follows: Sr. Rita K. Ishengoma, Social Communications Office, Geita Diocese, P.O. Box 120, Geita, Tanzania.
3. Bread for the World is a Christian citizen's action group. Write for information about how your small church community can be in league with this effort. Bread for the World, 802 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20018.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The facilitator asks the members to recall a striking word or phrase or sentence that someone said during this session. The community spends some time in quiet reflection. After a full two or three minutes of silence, the facilitator invites people to mention what it was that was striking to them.)

Leader: Creator Spirit, hidden builder of the Kingdom,
By the power of your saints guide the Church
To cross with courage the threshold of the new
Millennium and to carry to the coming generations
the light of the World who brings salvation.

All: Come, Spirit of love and peace!

Leader: Spirit of holiness, divine breath which moves the universe,
come and renew the face of the earth.
Awaken in Christians a desire for full unity,
that they may be for the world an effective sign and
instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity
of the whole human race.

All: Come, Spirit of love and peace!

From the official prayer for the second year of millennial preparation by the Holy Father

(The session concludes with the Lord's Prayer.)

