



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

August 1, 2010
Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sister Julie Cutter

RCL: Hosea 11:1-11; Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21
LM: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23; Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13; Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11; Luke 12:13-21

Today's readings remind us that though we worry and fret over material things, our life with God is what matters. What we achieve and how hard we work do not define life's meaning. God loves us abundantly and unconditionally, and no amount of effort on our part will change that. Despite our efforts and sacrifices, we persist in never being satisfied. The epidemic of consumerism speaks to our fears and sense of inadequacy. We buy things to reassure ourselves of our worth and goodness.

A wise saying encourages us to live each day as if it were our last. Those of us who live comfortably have the leisure to reflect on the saying. Those who live in poverty and hunger face each day with the possibility that it is their last day. Which of our day's activities would we drop if this day were our last? How could we be more in solidarity with those whose survival depends upon the food they encounter this day?

In the gospel reading from Luke, Jesus launches into a story about a farmer whose abundant harvest does not inspire him to share with needy people. Rather, he hoards his treasures, prompting God's condemnation.

A successful harvest, the fruit of honest labor, symbolizes God's bounteous care for us. Our challenge is to believe in God's abundant love, both in moments of abundance and in moments of scarcity. We work frantically to provide for our families, to fulfill our expectations of ourselves, and to store up for the future. Our fear that there will not be enough obsesses us. We do not take time for family, for reflection, for prayer, for outreach to needy ones. We buy into the myth of scarcity, doubting that God's abundance will suffice.

As Walter Brueggemann teaches:

We must confess that the central problem of our lives is that we are torn apart by the conflict between our attraction to the good news of God's abundance and the power of our belief in scarcity—a belief that makes us greedy, mean and unneighborly. We spend our lives trying to sort out that ambiguity.¹

1. Walter Brueggemann, "The liturgy of abundance, the myth of scarcity," *The Christian Century* (March 24–31, 1999) 343.
2. Pax Christi USA, *Peacemaking Day by Day*, vol. 2 (entry for Nov. 30) 136.



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Is there a provident God who wills that all have enough to eat? How does our behavior reveal that we believe in this God of abundance? Families of Mexican descent exemplify in their celebrations their belief in God's abundance. Every family event—birthday, wedding, baptism, graduation—calls for a gathering with food and drink and music for all. Eva invited her family, neighbors, and friends at church to share her birthday party. Entire families and unexpected guests arrived. Eva and her family graciously received all. Other cultures might carefully plan guest lists and check RSVPs. Do we thereby limit our generous sharing of God's abundance?

We are challenged by the words of Tissa Balasuriya:

Why is it that in spite of hundreds of thousands of Eucharistic celebrations, Christians continue as selfish as before? Why have the "Christian" peoples been the cruelest colonizers of human history? Why is the gap of income, wealth, knowledge and power growing in the world today, and that in favor of the "Christian" peoples? Why is it that persons and people who proclaim Eucharistic love and sharing deprive the poor people of the world of food, capital, employment and even land?²

We are called to be activists, working together to eliminate hunger and injustice with people who live on the edge. But the focus is on God's action, the creation of a new world, to which we are called and empowered to be instruments, channels of God's compassion. Are we called to lobby for changes in legislation so families are allowed government services to live dignified lives? I recall a national initiative that brought thousands of homeless people to Washington to meet with legislators and demand services. We church people were awed to silence in the conferences in which homeless persons told their own stories to elected officials. God speaks through people in need who are able to speak for themselves. As God's beloved ones, how do we accompany needy people in their own advocacy?

Children's Time [LH]

Many children probably remember times when their parents invited other families over to dinner at their houses. We invite a certain number of people and then prepare enough food for them. But what happens if someone we didn't invite shows up? Maybe we worry about having enough food or enough chairs at the table. God doesn't worry about those things. God welcomes people to join in celebrations, to be part of God's family, even those we don't expect would be invited. God finds a way to feed everyone and make everybody feel like they belong.

1. Walter Brueggemann, "The liturgy of abundance, the myth of scarcity," *The Christian Century* (March 24–31, 1999) 343.
2. Pax Christi USA, *Peacemaking Day by Day*, vol. 2 (entry for Nov. 30) 136.



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Musical Suggestions [LH]

O God Who Shaped Creation—The United Methodist Hymnal 443

We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky—The New Century Hymnal 563

Like a Mother Who Has Borne Us—The New Century Hymnal 583

The Harvest of Justice—Gather Comprehensive 711

Reflection from Hunger for the Word, Year C
© 2006 by the order of Saint Benedict, Inc.
Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota.
Reprinted with permission.

1. Walter Brueggemann, “The liturgy of abundance, the myth of scarcity,” *The Christian Century* (March 24–31, 1999) 343.
2. Pax Christi USA, *Peacemaking Day by Day*, vol. 2 (entry for Nov. 30) 136.