



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time: August 21, 2011
Karen Fitzpatrick

RCL: Exodus 1:8-2:10; Psalm 124; Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20

LM: Isaiah 22:19-23; Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8; Romans 11:33-36; Matthew 16:13-20

“Who do you say I am?” It is startling when the preacher asks this question in worship, using the names of members present: “Jim Brown, who do *you* say I am?” Ask at least three members you know by name, both men and women.

We all need to respond to that question. The answers we give today are not the same ones that served us at age 10 or 20 or 35. Nor can our responses simply repeat what we have been taught, parroting someone else’s answer.

Like Peter, I’ve learned from my heavenly Father who Jesus the Christ is for me. My life experiences are the means for this revealing. The gentle, loving Jesus of my childhood expanded as I matured, as I witnessed the Body of Christ suffering in places of war or famine. The bloated stomachs of kids with no future, the wailing of the relatives of those killed in Israel and Palestine, the silent witness of the mothers of the disappeared in Argentina – these have become the face of Christ to me. Dorothy Day challenging the war machine, Oscar Romero standing with his clergy and his people, Mother Teresa touching the disease-racked body of a dying man – these, too, are the face of Christ to me.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus asks his disciples about his identity at Caesarea Philippi. Visiting this lovely spot in northern Galilee today, the traveler finds cool and welcoming shade along the Banias River bringing water from Mount Hermon to the Jordan. In this place of quiet beauty and reflection, an answer can take shape. We, too, need a time to reflect on our experiences and identify their meaning, discovering Christ’s presence in our midst.

The passage from Isaiah in the Lectionary for Mass describes the leadership the Lord desires, paralleling Peter’s receiving the keys in today’s Gospel. In Isaiah’s account God approaches a worthy leader who will be the firm and well-fitted peg to support the tent in which God’s people will dwell (v. 23). From this leader, Eliakim, we draw the “O” antiphon tide for Christ, “O Key of David.”

Perhaps our prayers in this Sunday’s liturgy can reflect what we earnestly desire from our nation’s leaders: the courage to open the treasury to help the poorest ones among us, to open the grain bins of our nation’s Food Stamp Program to all who in justice would qualify. May God grant these same leaders the courage and firmness to shut down the flow of weapons to the world’s poorest nations, weapons that ensure another generation of hungry children whose education is mortgaged to pay for arms.



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The story of oppression and forced death of children in the reading from Exodus is replicated in our own time. It is relived as a mother walks miles to bring her sick child to the health clinic, only to discover the clinic has closed. Instead of supporting primary healthcare, government funds are allocated to repay the nation's debt, meaning that children will die needlessly from preventable diseases. It is repeated when a mother adds water to her infant formula to extend it and then sees her child waste and die rather than becoming fat-cheeked and healthy like the baby on the poster in the hospital.

Moses grew to health from his mother's own breast-feeding. Sadly, this natural and effective form of infant nutrition has faced denigration and lack of promotion as nations develop. Not just advertising, but policies and cultural norms get in the way of babies being fed in this way. Now, breast-feeding faces another threat with the possibility that HIV/AIDS can be transferred through breast milk. Present studies have mixed results. Confirmed studies show that breast-feeding not only passes on needed immunities and strengthens the mother-child bond but also provides enzymes needed for continuing brain tissue development.

Who do you say Jesus is?

Children's Time

Written by Larry Hollar

Ask each child to say his or her name. Drawing on the Gospel story, remind the children that everyone knew Jesus' name, but Jesus asked his friends a harder question. His question – Who do you say that I am? – invited them to think about what Jesus really meant to them and to the world and to God. We are God's precious children, every one of us, so whether our name is John or Mary or Tamika or Ahmed, God loves us. That's who we are. Maybe someday when someone we don't know asks us who we are, we can say, "I'm someone whom God loves. My name is _____."

Musical Suggestions

Build on a Rock – LBW 365

Take My Life, and Let it Be – UMH 399

God Our Author and Creator – NCH 530

In Egypt under Pharaoh – NCH 574

Reflection from Hunger for the Word, Year A

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