



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

March 7, 2010
Third Sunday of Lent
Ed and Lou Brandt

RCL: Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9
LM: Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15; Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9

Be in close touch with God for love and nurture: that is a prominent theme in the Lectionary for the Third Sunday of Lent. How difficult to be in communion with God, however, in a twenty-first-century environment of greed and quick gratification!

The prophet Isaiah says, “Don’t waste time and energy on things of no lasting value. Come and get the real life-giving benefits of God’s love and mercy without cost. God’s gifts, abundant and free, go beyond what you can even desire.” But in a consumer-driven society, surrounded with demands to go after the latest in technology, these free gifts of God are pushed aside and even seem insignificant and unnecessary.

Take an example from the U.S. immigrant farm-worker community. Frequently driven by poverty and lack of economic opportunity in such Mexican states as Michoacan, Oaxaca, and Veracruz, immigrants to the United States face overwhelming pressure, first to survive and then to consume more. They work so that their families, both in the United States and Mexico, can have life’s necessities. Yet their children, through peer pressure, the media, and advertising, want the current toys, computer games, designer clothes, snack food, music, and more. This burden saps resources and energy even more!

The passage from 1 Corinthians, while describing what happened to the people of Israel, mirrors today’s tempting reality. After being delivered from bondage in Egypt and receiving God’s gift of spiritual food and drink, the people become preoccupied with pleasures of the flesh and worshipping other things. The apostle Paul advises that things of this world can never satisfy the human soul and are never enough to end the search for meaning and fulfillment.

Therefore, a vital Lenten test for today’s Christian family, like the people of Israel, is to get back to faith in our liberator God. Through the Holy Spirit, God’s purifying fire, we let go of our greed and are free to relax in God’s purifying fire; we let go of our greed and are free to relax in God’s wonderful goodness through Word and Sacrament, enjoying divine forgiveness and friendship.



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In the book *Things That Make for Peace*, coauthor Mary Schramm explores the search for the simple life with God:

Talking with friends last night we concluded that marketplace minds result from boredom (just as overeating does), from lack of anything meaningful to do with one's life, from the desire to be in style, the need for one-upmanship, or from a fear of not conforming to accepted standards befitting one's background or position in life. Is it really naive to take Jesus at His word? "I will supply all your needs." (He didn't say: "all your greed.")¹

Schramm's question urges us to struggle with a crucial inquiry: Do God's spiritual gifts satisfy the human soul as nothing else in our world can?

The writer of Psalm 63 gives witness that the thirsty human soul is satisfied with God's steadfast love, as if it were enjoying "a rich feast." God's great love, better than life itself, evokes wonderful and joyful human praise! Each of today's passages offers images of food and water, making this a prime Sunday for reflecting in worship on the call to advocacy for poor and hungry people, and perhaps organizing an Offering of Letters.

Luke's Gospel strips away the worldly trappings of power and wealth, poverty and suffering, calling all people to repentance. God's invitation calls us into close communication with our Creator so that we all may bear fruit (like the fig tree in the parable), respond in love and praise, and share that same hope with others.

In the Roman Catholic reading from Exodus 3, we hear God's promise to Moses in the burning bush and at Horeb. This Lord, who once delivered the people of Israel through mighty acts, is the same one who today nourishes and gives life to our world.

A striking image in Psalm 103 is the verb "towers" in verse 11: God's love towers over the faithful. Since September 11, 2001, many have been sensitive to this word as a noun, that is, the World Trade Center towers and the national and global tragedy related to them. God's faithful presence soothes the most horrible of personal and national tragedies, from being displaced on the job to the AIDS pandemic, as God's people reach out in hope, healing, and justice to all. Divine love rises up to great heights to diminish human suffering.

1. John Schramm and Mary Schramm, *Things That Make for Peace: A Personal Search for a New Way of Life* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976) 67.



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Children's Time

As you offer a snack such as fruit juice and crackers, inquire, “What would happen if you had nothing more than this until this time next week? Would you be able to play, learn new things, or even rest comfortably? Some people in our world are hungry and don’t always have enough good things to eat. Just as we all need food and drink to live, so also we require God’s nourishment—through prayer, the Word, and Sacraments—offered to us every day! Be energized by it to love others, sharing hope and caring with everyone around you.” (If today is the time for your church’s Offering of Letters, invite the children to take part.)

Musical and Liturgical Suggestions

Call to Worship—*Banquet of Praise* 3

God, You Spoke Through a Burning Bush— *Banquet of Praise* 200

’Tis the Gift to Be Simple (Simple Gifts)— *Banquet of Praise* 167

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