

Sunday, July 18, 2010

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis 18:1-10; Psalm 15; Colossians 1: 24-28; Luke 10: 38-42

Today's theme is hospitality, so evident in the vivid description of Abraham, ancient dignitary that he was, running hither and yon to be sure his guests were refreshed and well fed. The psalm describes who may enjoy the hospitality of God's tent. As we move through Luke's gospel, we meet Martha and Mary of Bethany. Martha whom we will celebrate on July 29 "welcomed him into her home." The big sister, in charge! Jesus' remark may well mean, keep it simple—one dish, not a banquet, so you are free for other kinds of service, like listening. The author of Colossians goes so far as to welcome suffering for the sake of building up the Body of Christ, "that is, the Church." He is "completing what is lacking in Christ's passion."

What in your life causes you to "run" and "hasten" like Abraham? Is it worth it? If you could cook just one dish for Jesus, what would it be? Imagine preparing it, and then serving it. As the hostess/host, you initiate the conversation. About what? A final point for prayer: have you ever accepted suffering, let alone welcomed it, in order to be in solidarity with so much of the body of Christ? Would you be willing to?

You stand at our doors and knock. Grace us so that we may welcome anyone who knocks on our heart, who needs a home in our hearts, near neighbors or far neighbors.

Monday, July 19, 2010

Micah 6: 1-4, 6-8; Psalm 50; Matthew 12: 38-42

So frequently this spring and summer we have heard God say through the psalmist, I don't want your bloody sacrifices. "Those honor me who bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving." The reading from Micah reiterates God's sentiments. What God wants is "only this: do justice, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God." ONLY this? Yet, that three fold "requirement" does include and prioritize our Christian life. Many who use these reflections have professed religious vows: justice/poverty; tender love/chastity; and humility/obedience. Evangelical counsels, however, are for all the baptized.

Begin by bringing your sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. Then reflect on how you do justice; when you love tenderly; and how you do walk humbly with God. The last may be most difficult because too often we forget we are human (*humus*, Latin for dirt), not at all humble, but playing at being God. Ask for the grace you need.

Give us the courage and the opportunity to do justice. Thank you for all those who love us tenderly. Especially, let us walk with you, our God, humbly, as your loved creatures.

Tuesday, July 20, 2010

Micah 7: 14-15, 18-20; Psalm 85; Matthew 12: 46, 48-50

As we know, prophets usually speak God's word to the people, but today we hear Micah praying on behalf of the people, asking for shepherding and food. Then Micah tells the people that we have a God whose forgiveness and love is unswerving. Good news indeed. In the gospel, Jesus expands the good news. He breaks the physical bonds and invites us to be mother and brother and sister to him, if only we do the will of God.

And for you, what is the will of God? What does God want? What does God passionately desire? Ask the Spirit to teach you. How are you mother to Jesus? How do you mother the Christ, ruler of the universe? What does God want you to be/do as brother or sister? Ask the Spirit to teach you.

With our galaxy like your womb, God of the universe, we are all siblings, all being borne and born of you. Make us ever more aware of how we are related to one another.

Wednesday, July 21, 2010

Jeremiah 1: 1, 4-10; Psalm 71; Matthew 13: 1-9

Today we are told of God's call to Jeremiah. He protests, "I am only a boy!" but God protests more effectively, promising to deliver him. Unfortunately, the psalm verses end just before verse 18: "Now that I am old and gray..." Jesus compares the Word of God which he scatters to seed, only some of which can take root and produce grain.

When you were a boy or girl, what did God want of you? Remember and respond. When you were in mid-life, what "deliverance" did you need? Remember and respond. Are you old and gray yet? How do you continue to speak God's word if you are limited in energy, physically diminished? Remember how, like Jesus and Mary, you have been rooted in and growing in wisdom and grace, and give thanks.

We ask deliverance for all the abandoned and abused children of our world. We ask peace of heart and gratitude for all the elderly, especially those neglected and alone.

Thursday, July 22, 2010

Feast of Mary of Magdala

Song of Songs 3: 1-4 or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Psalm 63; John 20: 1, 11-18

Magdalene is not her last name, this dear friend and disciple of Jesus. She comes from the town of Magdala, clinging to the barren ground just above Capernaum and overlooking the sea of Galilee. Song of Songs narrates the beloved searching for her lover, fairly parallel to the gospel where Mary looks for Jesus in the tomb. She recognizes him when he calls her name. The Corinthian reading begins: "The love of Christ urges us

on,” and continues to emphasize the new creation won for us in Christ’s being raised. Mary was urged to mission by the Risen Christ, and what good news to share!

“I thirst for you, Lord my God,” is applied to Christ as Lord. When, how, why is that true for you? “I will call your name,” the psalmist continues, but when, like Mary, have you heard Jesus call your name? “Why are you weeping?” Christ asks Mary in the garden. What makes you weep? Share your tears with this couple.

Christ Jesus, we remember that you cried over Jerusalem. We want to weep with you over our weary world. We search, with hope, for your kindness toward the hopeless.

Friday, July 23, 2010

Jeremiah 3: 14-17; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 13: 18-23

After describing a farmer sowing seed hither and yon, describing how much is lost, finally Jesus proclaims that what was sown on good soil, “this is the one who hears the word and understands it.” We don’t need scripture degrees. God promises through Jeremiah that God will give us shepherds “after God’s own heart” to feed us with “knowledge and understanding.” Not that all preachers do feed us. However, when we hear the word, the Spirit teaches us and inspires us, as the Alleluia verse proclaims, to keep the word with a generous heart.

Whether you use words or actions, conversation or listening, speaking or service, how do you pass on good news? When do you allow time to ponder the word with a generous heart? What does “generous heart” mean to you? Pray for those who preach to you.

You promise that we will be radiant, that our mourning will be turned into joy. We hold you to this promise, especially for the neglected ones, and we want good preachers. Please!

Saturday, July 24, 2010

Jeremiah 7: 1-11; Psalm 84; Matthew 13: 24-30

On July 12, Isaiah announced the same message as Jeremiah does today: “act justly, do not oppress the alien, the orphan and the widow, do not shed innocent blood...” If the people of Israel didn’t “get it”, have we? God is enraged that the temple is “a den of thieves.” Psalm 84 takes a totally opposite tack: the temple is a place of joy, a home. And Jesus tells a parable that reminds us that it is God who judges and we had better not: the wheat and the weeds. We might uproot what looks like weed but really is wheat. “Let both of them grow together,” the Master advises, and then they can be separated truly.

You might look at “the temple” as our church, some of us acting for justice, some shedding innocent blood, some of us greedy thieves and some finding comfort and joy in

the Body of Christ. Who can judge? You might look at “the temple” as your own self. When have you cut down something that you judged as bad, nasty, sinful, only to find that where sin abounds, grace abounds more? Ask to trust God to be your only judge. There must be some judgment in order to avoid evil, but we are not allowed to judge motives of others. Only God can judge the heart and its motives. That should be a relief to you!

Forgive us and all the people of the world who avoid justice and choose greed, who ignore aliens, widows, orphans, and all the voiceless of today’s society.