**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer, August 1, 2021**

**18th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

“*A whole batch of bread is made holy*

*if the first handful of bread is made holy.” Romans 11:16*

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME  (Betty Thompson)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Suzie and I had the pleasure of preparing for this Sunday.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott for our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today:

Carolyn Henrich, Peg Duchesne, Peggy Thompson, Debbie Ballard, Denise Heckman, Pat Gabig, Paula Lake, Richard McGinnis, Bob Gallagher, and Ann Jelen.

* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Richard McGinnis)**

Let’s begin with Thomas Keating’s traditional beginning to centering prayer:  Here and now, we consent to God’s presence and action in us.   Let our breath carry our consent deep into our body…  breath by breath… letting our breath carry off distractions…  every breath deepening our consent to God’s presence and action in us. We take one breath to be here…. one to be together….  and one to let God take over.  (Pause)

We begin our celebration by singing with Reggie Ott our prayer to be bread for the world.

**OPENING  SONG – LET US BE BREAD by Thomas J. Porter (Reggie Ott)**

Choose verses:

Refrain:
Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord,
broken and shared, life for the world.
Let us be wine, love freely poured.
Let us be one in the Lord.

1 I am the bread of life, broken for all.
Eat now and hunger no more. [Refrain]

2 You are my friends if you keep my commands,
no longer servants but friends. [Refrain]

3 See how my people have nothing to eat.
Give them the bread that is you. [Refrain]

4 As God has loved me so I have loved you.
Go and live on in my love. [Refrain]

**GREETING / CALL TO WORSHIP (Denise Heckman)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!  Alleluia, alleluia!

**All:** Thanks be to God!  Alleluia!  Alleluia!

**GATHERING PRAYER (Denise Heckman)**

O gracious mystery that we name God,

Make us ready to let your Spirit be yeast in us, active even when we don’t notice.

Now let us pray with the words of Alla Renée Bozarth:

Bakerwoman God, I am your living bread.
I am your low, soft and being-shaped loaf.

I am your rising bread,
I am bread well-kneaded.

Put me in fire, Bakerwoman God,
I am white and gold, soft and hard,
brown and round. I am so warm from fire

Bakerwoman God, remake me.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME  (Denise Heckman)**

Today we continue scripture readings about bread – bread that gives Life to our bodies and to our souls.

Doesn’t bread always seems a bit magical when we make it? We take water, yeast, salt, and flour.  Really simple things. And together they literally rise into something new – and delicious.

How does that happen?  Transformation takes many steps – in bread and in us.  The wheat or corn or rice lets go of its chaff, keeping the essential kernel, the healthy goodness of the grain. The grain is ground into flour. Yeast works invisibly to bring life into that flour.  Kneading creates elasticity.  Patient waiting gives time for growth.  Finally heat lets dough take a sturdy form.

And then comes communion – the breaking and sharing of bread around our tables.

*(Slight pause)*

Now Pat Gabig will read from the 16th chapter of the book of Exodus.  Then Richard McGinnis will offer questions and silence for reflection.  Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1** [**Ex 16:2-4, 12-15**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/exodus/16?2)  **(Pat Gabig)**

The whole Israelite community complained to Moses and Aaron.
saying, “If only we had died by YHWH’s hand in the land of Egypt,
where we sat by our pots of meat and ate our bread until we were filled!
But now you brought the whole community into this wilderness to die of hunger!”

Then YHWH said to Moses: “I have heard the community’s complaints. Say to the people of Israel: ‘Each day you are to go out and gather a daily portion; In the evening you shall eat meat,
and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread,
Then you will know that I, YHWH, am your God.’”

So it came about that in the evening quail flew in.

And in the morning dew lay all around the camp,
When the dew evaporated, there
were delicate flakes like frost on the ground.
When they saw this the people asked each other, “What is this?”
And Moses told them,
“This is the bread that YHWH has given you to eat.”

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 1** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Richard McGinnis)**

What “bread” is God offering you? How do you feel about tasting it?

Think of a table around which you have experienced communion. As you sit there, notice your feelings and savor what you are sensing.

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**     **(Betty:** Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Betty:  Now Peg Duchesne will read from the 6th chapter of the Gospel of John.

**READING 2**:  [**John 6:24-35**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/6?24)  **(Peg Duchesne)**

This reading picks up the day after the feeding of the 5000.

When the people couldn’t find Jesus or his disciples, they got into their boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for them. When they found Jesus on the other side, they said, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

Jesus answered: “The truth is that you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that goes bad, but work for food that lasts for all eternity. This is food the Son of Man can give you, the One upon whom God has set his seal.”

At this they said, “What must we do if we are to carry out God's work?”

Jesus gave them this answer, “This is the work of God: to believe in the one whom God has sent.”

So they asked Jesus, "What sign will you yourself do, which will make us believe in you? What work will you do? Scripture says our ancestors ate manna in the desert, which God gave them to eat.”

Jesus answered them: “It **is** God who gives you true bread from heaven.  The bread of God is the bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

“Teacher,” they said, “give us that bread from now on.”

Jesus answered them: “I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever hunger; no one who believes in me will ever thirst."

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 2** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Richard McGinnis)**

If Jesus is our bread of life, what life-giving kernels are given to you? How are you using them?

What are your favorite ways of nourishing yourself? How regularly do you do them?

What signs do you need in order to believe that there’s enough bread for all?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**     **(Betty:** Share slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**READING 3:**  ` **(Betty Thompson)**

We began today by sharing how magical it feels for Suzie and me when we make bread. Now we’d like to try something with you – to look at the steps in this process and tell you the questions they hold for us.

Begin with a grain, like wheat, corn, or rice. In simpler times, the harvested grain was tossed up into the air. The lightweight outer covering, the chaff, blew off in the wind. The nourishing kernel fell back onto the cloth on the ground.

We ask:  How do we let go of our chaff?  How do we hold onto the life-giving kernel that we know in Jesus? [Pause.]

Look at the yeast. It’s a living organism, found in the air. For thousands of years, bakers relied on the wild yeasts of the air. They carefully saved a handful of their “starter” dough to leaven the next loaf. Starter was sometimes passed down like a precious heirloom.  A good starter produces a multitude of good loaves.

What yeast is in the air now?  What heirloom yeast have you been given? [Pause.]

Next we mix the flour and yeast with a little salt and oil to make a soft dough. Now it’s time for the baker to add human energy in the hard work of kneading. Imagine yourself as the dough, pushed and folded again and again as the dough changes. In the dough, different strands of protein are connecting and forming something different. Imagine yourself as the baker. Your hands know when the dough is ready, when it stops being soft and sticky and becomes smooth and firm and elastic. It has become something new, something connected and strong.

How is life kneading you right now?  What different pieces in yourself are you being pushed to connect? Can you feel new life beginning to take shape? [Pause.]

Bread dough requires darkness as the yeast works and the dough doubles in size. And a good loaf requires “punching down,” a step that always startles me. The baker literally knocks the air out of the dough, and then kneads it again. And next time the dough rises, it is stronger and firmer and finer. At last, the baker forms the loaves and they go into the oven where the transformation is completed - in heat.

When have you thought you were almost there, only to be punched down and kneaded again? Are you in a time of waiting in darkness? A time of transforming heat? [Pause.]

And finally imagine carrying the warm, fresh loaves to the table to share. Bread is our communion with the Earth - living grain and yeast brought forth by Sun and Rain and Air and Earth. And our communion with the farmers and millers and grocery workers and others whose work led to the bread. And - Bread is our communion with each other around our shared table. A communion that gives us life and transforms us.

A communion we carry into the world.

Bread – made, given, received, and shared – is life indeed.

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 3** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Richard McGinnis)**

What is your chaff that needs to be blown away?

What heirloom yeast have you been given?

How is life kneading you right now?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**     **(Betty:** Share slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Betty:  Peggy Thompson will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING  (Peggy Thompson)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings.  That helps us to glimpse the many ways God is among us.  We welcome new voices, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections.  [Long pause.]

Please unmute yourself to speak. Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

Now Debbie Ballard will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Debbie Ballard)**

Jesus tells us that the bread of life is ours.  So we turn with confidence to the one whom we name God.  Our response will be, “Bread of life, live in us.”

Jesus, first one blessed and broken, make me a good handful of dough, one who trusts enough to be kneaded, one who loves enough to be shared. For this we pray.  Bread of life, live in us.

In gratitude for whatever nourishes us and helps us feel communion, may we share it with joy.  For this we pray.  Bread of life, live in us.

In solidarity with those whose physical hunger puts them at risk, may we recognize the connections between poverty and racism, and work to end both.  For this we pray.  Bread of life, live in us.

For leaders of women religious, may they find nourishment, communion, and no Zoom glitches at their annual assembly in 12 days. For this we pray.  Bread of life, live in us.

Now let’s remember the feelings and prayers that arose in us as we shared reflections, and also the prayers we carry with us.  *[Pause.]*

Now, for what else shall we pray?  Please remember to unmute and mute yourself.

(People speak.)  Bread of Life, live in us.

Thank you.

O God, we give you all our prayers, spoken and unspoken.  We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you.  Amen.

*(Slight pause)*

**OFFERTORY (Paula Lake)**

Sit with the feeling of savoring food that nourishes you.  *[Pause.]* Look around.  Whose hunger can you help to satisfy this week?  What commitment will you make this week? *[Longer pause.]*

Let us pray.  Generous God, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to your abundant love.  Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Carolyn Henrich)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in and among us.  [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet

and said, “… as I have done for you, you should also do.”

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it.  [Pause.]

Holy One, make us your bread of abundance.  Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER                                                                                              (Bob Gallagher)**

Now let us join our hearts to pray with all who seek peace and justice throughout the world:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, Our Mother, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.  Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.  Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Ann Jelen)**

Broken, we have gathered. Nourished, we reach out.

Let us now go forth in peace:

in communion with each other

and offering communion to a hungry world. Amen.

Let us close by singing with Reggie our hope for the world!

**CLOSING SONG:  BREAD OF LIFE, HOPE FOR THE WORLD  by Bernadette Farrell**

Refrain: Bread of life, hope of the world,
Jesus Christ, our brother:
feed us now, give us life,
lead us to one another.

The bread we break and share

was scattered once as grain:

just as now it is gathered,

make your people one. Refrain

You are the bread of peace,
you are the wine of joy,
broken now for your people,
poured in endless love. Refrain

**RESOURCES**

“We need a theology of bread,” Christian Food Movement, https://christianfoodmovement.org/2018/06/12/we-need-a-theology-of-bread/

 “Fresh Bread” by Joyce Rupp

Bakerwoman God” by Alla Renée Bozarth