

# LIVING EUCHARIST INITIATIVE

## “Common Threads” Homily Helps & Intercessions

### February 2009

#### February 1, 2009 – Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Psalm 95 – *If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*

Mark 1:21-28 – *The unclean spirit cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?"*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” - HOMILY

This psalm response reappears from time to time throughout the liturgical year. In fact the Church places it as the antiphon of the Invitatory Psalm each day at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Hours! Indeed it is a challenging verse which may strike a rather sobering, possibly disturbing chord in the ears of us who are assembled around the altar to celebrate the Eucharist. It strikes a message diametrically opposed to the very spirit of our theme, "THE LIVING EUCHARIST." It is sobering in that it brings to mind that we have the unfortunate capacity and possibly the unconscious tendency to deaden the very celebration that draws us around the altar of the *LIVING EUCHARIST* each Sunday.

The homilist walks a fine line if he chooses to reflect on this verse. While striving to bring home the fact that there is in all of us a spirit of resistance to hear God AS HE DESIRES TO ADDRESS EACH ONE OF US PERSONALLY, the homilist also strives to celebrate that GOD DOES IN FACT SPEAK TO EACH OF US PERSONALLY--for our good, for our growth, for our healing and for our freedom from sin. The spirit of resistance is reflected in the dynamic confrontation of Jesus in face of the unclean spirit: "*Have you come to destroy us?*" Jesus does come to destroy: to destroy darkness with his light, to destroy despair with his hope, destroy hatred with his love, destroy bondage with his freedom, and to destroy death with his life. Jesus comes to give life and to give life more abundantly.

We must focus on the power of Christ Jesus who confronts the spirit of resistance in each of us rather than be captivated by the unclean spirits that foment anger and hostility in us and in our society. As violently as evil shouts and rages in opposition to God, Jesus quietly but strongly exercises the power of Life. Let us surrender to the Lord NOW, during this sacred time of hearing God's Word, and respond more fully to be nourished by the "Living Bread come down from heaven," the "Body of Christ," when we receive Holy Communion at the celebration of this Liturgy. "*He commands unclean spirits, and they obey him.*" He is in our midst as the Lord of power and life.

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSIONS

That we may welcome into our hearts the healing Word of God, "living and active as a two edged sword." May Christ's enter into those areas of our hearts and our lives where anger and hostility still find a place to isolate us and disturb our personal wellbeing and family harmony. We pray to the Lord.

That our celebration of the *Living Eucharist* may enable us to see Christ at work in the Church, in our nation and in the world, even in the face of so many violent spirits that strive to rob us of hope and joy. We pray to the Lord

That the celebration of the Eucharist may renew us and empower us to go forth into a world disturbed by noise and rancor in order to be carriers of peace by the way we live our lives. We pray to the Lord.

That we may learn to appreciate the value of silence, and allow the Lord to work powerfully in the silence of our reflective hearts. We pray to the Lord.

## February 8, 2009 – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Psalm 147 – *Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.*

Mark 1:29-39 – *Jesus cured many who were sick.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

Reflect a little on the theme of love songs. Many--if not most--express the sadness of a broken heart. The psalms too lament the human condition of hearts broken either by others or by one's own sinful choices. Whereas the love songs that fill our airways have no remedy for broken hearts, the Word of God always addresses the ever powerful presence of the Lord who heals the brokenhearted, as does Psalm 147 in today's celebration of the Eucharist. The great gift of the *LIVING EUCHARIST* celebrates the Living Lord who heals hearts broken because of sin, betrayal, lust, greed, self centeredness and a controlling spirit.

This psalm prepares us to hear the Gospel narrative in which Jesus is active in healing. Last week we experienced Jesus casting an unclean spirit from a man who confronted him while he was preaching in the synagogue. Today's Gospel continues that story. On leaving the synagogue, his newly chosen apostle Peter, invites Jesus into his home in order to cure his mother in law. He responds by lifting her from bed renewed and whole. News spreads fast. People crowd at the door of this house. The surging crowd, the pain of broken bodies, broken hearts, and the malice of evil spirits are as real today as then. So too the cries for help and healing. All this creates an energy of deep anguish.

How can we communicate this in our proclamation of this Gospel? All we need do is to recall the pain and anguish we experience each day in our parishes as well as in the pictures of the suffering that fill our TV screens during the evening news. Are we simply passive and overwhelmed in the face of this reality? If our celebration of the Eucharist is to be truly “alive” in our own lives, we must come as did Peter and the crowds to the Lord and lay before him our pain--physical, emotional and spiritual. We have to begin with ourselves and sing again that Psalm response, but with more fervor and meaning.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus went off by himself early the next morning to pray. Today, at this very altar we can join Jesus Christ in prayer to his Father. He desires to heal our brokenness as alive and active as then.

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSIONS

That we may have the courage to face our own broken hearts and the faith in Christ Jesus to ask him to begin the process of healing at the celebration of the Eucharist today. We pray to the Lord

That we may have ears and hearts open to hear the cry of those who seek healing--beginning with members of our own family as well as in the family of humankind throughout the world.  
We pray to the Lord

That we may seek forgiveness if we have been the cause of pain for others, or if we have been passive in the face of other's need for healing. We pray to the Lord.

## February 15, 2009 – Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46 – *The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall keep his distance; he shall cry out 'unclean, unclean.' ....He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp.*

Mark 1:40-45 – *The leper begged Jesus, "If you wish, you can make me clean. Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched the leper, and said to him, 'I do will it. Be made clean.'"*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

Two weeks ago we were confronted with an “unclean spirit” who possessed a man in a synagogue and who screamed out at Jesus to leave him alone. This spirit was the evil one of darkness and destruction who opposed the light, the power and the healing of Jesus. It cried out to Jesus to be left alone to work its evil malice. This spirit was confronted and vanquished by Christ.

The uncleanness in today's Gospel is quite different. This uncleanness of leprosy is a physical sickness that wounds the soul as well. In today's episode the leper cries out for healing. He approached Jesus and knelt before him. He begs to be set free. Leprosy of that society was the AIDS of our own day. People feared the contagion. Those who suffered from it were ostracized and had to live life in isolation. They were obliged to identify themselves as unclean so that those approaching would keep their distance. They were the refuse, the 'untouchables' of society. The pain they suffered was both physical as well as emotional. The wounds that pierced their hearts was often more painful than the wounds on their bodies.

Leprosy is not common today, but the internal wounds of the heart are many and deep. Today's Gospel can help surface some of our inner wounds if we have the courage to identify with the leper. What about our emotional pain of "not fitting in," the sense of "not being good enough," the gnawing feeling of not belonging or the anguish of being rejected and our talents or our ideas being counted as irrelevant? If we have the courage to reflect, all of these touch most of us to some degree. What do we do with this pain and the isolating spirit that stirs within us and that often we hide from others? We may too easily cover it up with anger or resentment or by being overly aggressive by trying to prove we are “somebody.” Smiling on the outside, we may be depressed or nursing a resentment, or feeling insecure, or seething with anger on the inside.

How does Jesus look upon us in this sorry state? The Gospel narrative states that he was moved with pity at the sight and the cry of the leper. His compassion has not diminished over the years. Jesus is still moved with compassion, and we can experience his compassion in the celebration of the *LIVING EUCHARIST* at this very moment. And if we approach him as did the leper – with openness and with a cry for healing – he very likely may ask us to take some action. Christ told the leper to fulfill what Moses prescribed. His healing was not merely a passive acceptance. The leper was required to enter into the process of the healing. What might that be in our lives? Possibly reflecting more deeply on the root causes of our inner sense of isolation?

Once these causes begin to surface, we must bring them to the Lord and ask him to enter into them and into the memories and begin the process of striving to forgive the persons who wounded us. We may realize the need to speak to a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Possibly seek the aid of a qualified counselor? All of this is to be done within the spirit and attitude of the leper. Recall the very moving detail in today's Gospel: *Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper*. He is eager to do the same for us. Are we willing to tell him where it hurts? Are we willing to take time to search our hearts and take some action Jesus may ask, so that the process of healing begins and progresses?

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* "COMMON THREADS" - INTERCESSIONS

That as the People of God we strive to remove all prejudice from our parish community and from our society, relying upon the power of Jesus who touched the leper and healed him. We pray to the Lord.

That we take time in prayer and in reading the Word of God to reflect on our own inner wounds and the sins and rejections that caused them and beg the Lord to free us from fear and isolation. We pray to the Lord

That we may accept and respect those whom our society regards as "untouchables" and outcasts and hold them up in prayer today. We pray to the Lord.

