

## *Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time*

June 15, 2008

Ex 19:2-6      Rom 5:6-11      Mt 9:36-10:8

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Picture a beautiful peach orchard in your mind. The trees are laden with fresh, sweet fruit, brightly yellow and tinged with rose blush, the gift given to every single piece from the patient endurance of the roots that generously carried nourishment to each one.

Now reach up to pick them. What if you discovered that they refused to give themselves over to you? That they clung tenaciously to the branch? That they defied and fought and dared you to take them? What would happen in a short time? We know the answer. Their loveliness would decay from within, spread their poison throughout the tree, and eventually destroy it. By their nature and conditioning, they were meant to surrender all they were given so that peaches would last forever. The Eucharist of the orchard has always been a great inspiration to me.

All three Readings today speak of this awesome mystery. In Exodus, God reminds the Israelites how they are being sustained and carried on “eagle wings” as long as they feed from God’s promises, which makes them “dearer than all other people.” How God longed for them to grow into a “holy nation” through the keeping and sharing of God’s Covenant among themselves.

Paul tells us in Romans that we are nurtured with the Body and Blood, the Eucharist, of the One who chose to give Himself over so that we would have both a reconciliation to give to others and to receive from them.

Finally, Matthew shows us the Eucharist of Jesus whose close friends have nourished themselves from His wisdom and teachings and are now summoned to go forth and feed others. No holding back here on Jesus’ part! Go, find the lost sheep, give away everything you have been given. As long as you do this, it will never run out.

One day in jail, I was giving spiritual counseling to an inmate. After we prayed, she reached into her pocket and pulled out a pathetic little candy in its wrinkled wrapper. She handed it to me with the words, “It’s all I have, but I want you to know how grateful I am that you’re here with me.” Though we are forbidden to receive anything that could be considered contraband, I could not refuse the “Eucharist” she graced me with, for it was her own self that was being handed over, and I kept it in my office next to our tabernacle. Often, Eucharist is a hug, a little cross carved out of soap, a thank-you note, a hand reaching through a locked cell slit, or simply the words, “Will you come back again to see me?” These gestures feed me in incredible ways and give me strength to walk their journeys with them.

So, the next time someone needs a lane change on the freeway, give him or her the Eucharist of slowing down. When a transient approaches you, give that person the Eucharist of a smile. When you enter a crowded elevator, give everyone the Eucharist of a positive presence. When you must endure an annoying cell phone conversation right next to you, give someone the Eucharist of social space. When your plans are interrupted because of a late comer, give your friend the Eucharist of patience. **“Without cost you have received. Without cost you are to give.”** If so, Eucharist will never run out because the Tree of Life will forever nourish and sweeten the hunger of a giving heart.

*“I came to offer thee a flower.  
But thou must have ALL my garden!  
It is thine!”*                      *R. Tagore*