

Fifth Meeting: Relative to the Feast of Corpus Christi.

‘Give them something to eat yourselves!’

Jesus asks us to look after the starving!

Preparation: A paten and some hosts, some pay slips or salary statements, an icon of the multiplication of loaves, press-cuttings concerning unemployment and or peoples’ needs (housing, protection from violence, education, access to clean water, etc.)

Welcome setting and Opening Hymn:

After the customary words of welcome, and when everyone is seated so that everyone can see one another, we relate *what has been possible to apply in accordance with decisions taken at the preceding meeting.*

Leader: Since the beginning of the year, we have been seeking to change our way of living in the light of the Gospel. We trust the promises it contains, even if its message is sometimes harsh and upsets us. With this hymn, we repeat our joy of maintaining trust in this Word: (hymn on the theme of solidarity with the poor.)

Prayer: *God of love and mercy, you are always near to your people when we cry to you in famine or distress. Thanks to Jesus, you satisfy our hunger for food and dignity. You have passed on this strength by your Gospel. Come now to relieve the suffering of our humanity, starving for freedom, food and justice. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

1- Let us examine our lives: Seeing the symbols set out on the table:

- *Is there a link between these items?*
- *Why do you think the working classes take their distance from the Church?*
- *For the Feast of the Eucharist, a reading on feeding the hungry is proposed. Is it a good choice?*

2- Sung Acclamation of the Word of God (short refrain) and **Proclamation of the Gospel:**

Lk 9:11b-17. The reading will be done in dialogue: Narrator, Jesus and the Twelve (i.e., all the group members – if they have the same version – if not, three or four people can read at the same time). After a few minutes of silence, the dialogue reading will be done in the same way. Again, keep silent for a few moments.

Deepen the meaning of the reading: According to Luke, Jesus spent the day speaking about the Reign of God before asking the Twelve (his closest friends) to feed the starving. They are afraid to share the little they have... At the end of the day, because they have accepted the risk of sharing, they are even richer: twelve hampers full!

- *‘Send the crowds away’, said the Apostles. Too spiritual a faith can distance us from the poor. Does a commitment for justice bring us closer to God?*
- *What if the Twelve had not shared the little they had?*
- *How did the people feel seeing Jesus and the Twelve look after them?*
- *For you, what is the Reign of God? What is the link between Justice and the Eucharist?*

3- Pray *Psalm 10* with the poor and the starving (in two choirs):

a- *Yahweh, why do you stand aside, why hide from us now the times are hard?*

The poor man is devoured by the pride of the wicked, he is caught in the wiles that the other has devised..

b- *The evil man boasts of his soul's desires, the grasping man blasphemes the wicked spurns Yahweh. His anger is up there, he will not make me pay! There is no God!' This is the way his mind works.*

a- *At every moment his course is assured, your rulings are too lofty for his notice; his rivals? He sneers at them all.*

'Nothing can shake me' he assures himself. Himself untouched by disaster, he curses others.

b- *Peering and prying for the out-of-luck, lurking unseen like a lion in his hide, lurking to capture the poor man, the poor man seized, he drags him away in his net.*

Fraud and oppression fill his mouth, spite and iniquity are under his tongue; there in the reeds he lies in ambush to kill the innocent where no one can see.

a- *Questing of eye, he stoops, he crouches, and the luckless wretch falls into his power*

as he thinks to himself, 'God forgets, he hides his face, he does not see at all'.

b- *Rise, Yahweh, God raise your hand, do not forget the poor!*

Why does the wicked man spurn God, assuring himself, 'He will not make me pay'?

a- *You yourself have seen the distress and the grief, you watch and then take them into your hands; the luckless man commits himself to you, you, the orphan's certain help.*

b- *Break the power of the wicked, of the evil man, seek out his wickedness till there is none to be found!*

Yahweh is king for ever and ever, the pagans are doomed to vanish from his country.

a- *Yahweh, you listen to the wants of the humble, you bring strength to their hearts, you grant them a hearing, judging in favour of the orphaned and exploited, so that earthborn man may strike fear no longer.*

(b- Glory to the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, both now and forever, Amen.)

4- Putting the Word of God into practice. Reaching this part of the meeting, we run the risk of believing that it is not worth 'chancing' what we have for the coming of the Kingdom. However, Jesus, who knows the limitations of our group, trusts us, 'Give them something to eat yourselves!'

- *We don't have any more... What talents, gifts, do we have to put together for greater justice?*
- *A certain organisation (groups of 50, Jesus gives and the Twelve distribute, they gather the leftovers...) is clear from the text. How could we organise ourselves?*
- *What decisions are we to take in the coming week and for the future?*

The meeting ought not to conclude without clear-cut decisions according to the group's capabilities. Clarify: who, what, where, when, etc.

Prepare the next meeting: place, date, leaders...

Final Hymn in the line of the mission of justice that Jesus has entrusted to us as his disciples.

MOVING AHEAD

Some more ideas

a- 'Bless, Lord, this meal, those who have prepared it and provide food for those who do not have any.' What do you think of those who say that this prayer is not 'Christian', in that it absolves us from the responsibility for feeding the poor by referring it back to God?

b- Choose one of the cartoons below and discuss



c- Invite leaders from Caritas or another organisation (why not Muslim?) for a cup of tea and information on their activities.

d- Run a competition to write a grace before meals to include appeals for justice and sharing.

e- Go on the Web - <http://www.editionsquartmonde.org> N° 208 - *Religions: The struggle of the poor*. Read one or other of the articles: Islam and poverty; the poor in the Protestant tradition; faith and struggle; testimonies (including one from Algeria!).

