

The Feeding of the Multitude

A Service of Communion

by Carolyn C. & Larry K. Dipboye



Litany of Hunger

LEADER ONE: People of God, we have gathered this banquet at the invitation of our friends, reminded that all of God's children share our common hunger for food and drink.

PEOPLE: We have eaten our fill. Our thirst is quenched. But the gnawing need remains deep within our selves. We hunger and thirst for righteousness.

LEADER TWO: Hear the word of our Lord: "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

PEOPLE: Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

LEADER ONE: We remember the ancestors who ate manna in the wilderness, and died.

PEOPLE: "This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die."

LEADER TWO: We hear the invitation of our Lord: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

LEADER ONE: Let us pray with Christ:

The Lord's Prayer in unison ("trespasses")

Invitation to the Table

Each table will choose a disciple to bring their bread from the Communion Table. A filled cup, covered by a napkin, is already at each table. The disciples will now use the napkins to carry the bread back to their tables.

The Meditation (led by the two communicants)

The Blessing

LEADER ONE: (Lifts up the loaf and breaks it in two pieces) Jesus blessed the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body that is for you."

The bread is passed around the tables. Participants hold their pieces.

LEADER TWO: (Lifts the cup) Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sin."

The cups are passed around the tables. Participants dip and eat.

The Commission

LEADER: "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

PEOPLE: We have received the bread and the cup, the body and blood of Christ. We are filled with Christ.

LEADER: Jesus told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost."

The appointed disciples bring the remaining bread and wine to the Table.

The Benediction

LEADER ONE: Behold, the fragments of our feast. The banquet of the Kingdom of God goes on.

PEOPLE: At the Table of the Lord, there is always more than enough.

LEADER TWO: We have come to this Table at the bidding of our Lord. Now let us "go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that God's house and all God's children may be filled."

—Larry & Carolyn Dipboye are copastors of a church in Oakridge, Tennessee. The full version of this service, with instructions, is on pages 11-12 of your 2005 Hunger Emphasis packet.

Perhaps the most telling tie between the Galilean miracle and the Lord's Supper is the ritual language Jesus uses in distributing the food to the multitude. The multiplication of the loaves and fish follows a ritual familiar to the church and verbs that belong with the institution of the Lord's Supper. Lifting the bread, Jesus "took," "blessed," "broke," and "gave" to the disciples to distribute to the people. And the people "took" and "ate."

Hunger and Poverty Around the World

852 million people across the world are hungry, up from 842 million a year ago.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004 (www.fao.org)*

More than 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes every day—one child every five seconds.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003 (www.fao.org)*

Hunger is the most extreme form of poverty, where individuals or families cannot afford to meet their most basic need for food.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

Hunger manifests itself in many ways other than starvation and famine. Most poor people who battle hunger deal with chronic undernourishment and vitamin or mineral deficiencies, which result in stunted growth, weakness and heightened susceptibility to illness.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

Countries in which a large portion of the population battles hunger daily are usually poor and often lack the social safety nets we enjoy, such as soup kitchens, food stamps, and job training programs. A family in a poor country that cannot grow enough food or earn enough money to buy food has nowhere to turn for help.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

More than 1.2 billion people in the world live below the international poverty line, earning less than \$1 per day.—*United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2003—Millennium Development Goals: A Compact Among Nations to End Human Poverty (www.undp.org)*

Poor people have problems obtaining adequate, nutritious food. As a result, 815 million people in are undernourished. They consume less than the minimum amount of calories essential for sound health and growth.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004 (www.fao.org)*

Undernourishment negatively affects people's health, productivity, sense of hope and overall well-being. A lack of food can stunt growth, slow thinking, sap energy, hinder fetal development and contribute to mental retardation.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

The constant securing of food consumes valuable time and energy of poor people, allowing less time for work and earning income. The lack of food also erodes relationships and feeds shame so that those most in need of support are often least able to call on it.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

Hunger and Poverty in the United States

The minimum wage in 1968 was \$1.60 per hour. It would be \$8.70 today if it had kept pace with inflation.—*Brennan Center, New York University Law School, November 2004*

In 1965, CEOs in major companies made 24 times more than the average worker. In 2003, CEOs earned 185 times more than the average worker.—*Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America 2004-2005 (www.epinet.org)*

Out of 3,066 counties in the US, someone who works full-time and earns the federal minimum wage can afford to pay rent and utilities on a one-bedroom apartment IN ONLY FOUR OF THOSE COUNTIES. —*New York Times, "Study Finds Gap in Wages and Housing Costs," December 2004*

The typical US worker must earn \$15.37 an hour if he/she is to dedicate 30 percent of his/her income to housing costs.—*New York Times, "Study Finds Gap in Wages and Housing Costs," December 2004*

More than 30 million workers in the US earn poverty-level wages of less than \$8.20 per hour.—*William Quigley, Ending Poverty as We Know It: Guaranteeing A Right to A Job at a Living Wage, 2003*

The total population of Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Tennessee represents the number of people in the US living below the official poverty line. —*William Quigley, Ending Poverty as We Know It: Guaranteeing A Right to A Job at a Living Wage, 2003*

The difference in income per head between the richest nation and the poorest nation in 1750 was about 5 to 1. Today the difference between the richest nation, Switzerland, and the poorest nation, Mozambique, is about 400 to one.—*David S. Landes, The Wealth and Poverty of Nations, 1998*

How the World Lives

Today our world houses 6.39 billion people.—*Population Reference Bureau: 2003 World Population Data Sheet. (www.prb.org)*

The United States is a part of the developed or industrialized world, which consists of about 50 countries with a combined population of only 0.9 billion, less than one sixth of the world's population.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

In contrast, approximately 5 billion people live in the developing world. This world is made up of about 125 low and middle-income countries in which people generally have a lower standard of living with access to fewer goods and services than people in high-income countries.

—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

The remaining 0.4 billion live in countries in transition, which include the Baltic states, eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003 (www.fao.org)*

Of the 6.2 billion people in the world today, 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 per day, 2.8 billion live on less than \$2 per day. The richest one percent in the world receive as much income as the poorest 57 percent. —*UN Human Development Report, 2002*

The US Congress under President Bush has been more generous in helping poor countries than under President Clinton. In 2003, the US increased official development assistance to poor countries by one-fifth. However, the US ranks last in contributions among the top 22 countries in proportion to economy.—*Nicholas D. Kristof, "Land of Penny Pinchers," New York Times, January 2005*

US Americans on average give 15 cents per day in government assistance to poor countries. US Americans spend 60 cents a day on soft drinks.—*Nicholas D. Kristof, "Land of Penny Pinchers," New York Times, January 2005.*

art by Curtis Cannon