

Sunday, August 03, 2008 La Gonave, Haiti

Daily, for devotions I use the lectionary readings. I save the gospel for Sunday morning and allow it to be the culmination of a weeklong sermon. We then attend church for hymns, prayers and preaching we only partially understand.

Today as first Sunday, most United Methodists will be sharing the sacraments, and although a meaningful experience for most, I pray today will be an epiphany for many. The gospel, Matthew 14:13-21, has new meaning as I sit in church with three in our community who are starving. We will not share "Eucharist" as that seldom happens in Haiti.

Our mission has designated funds of \$3500.00 to feed old, starving people; those with no family or ability to work or find food. We have asked pastors and community leaders to give us lists of those actually starving. In Source a Philippe we see them. In 10 months we have watched some die and others daily dying.

The pastors are making lists that average 10 to 14 people per community. The communities we are intimately involved with number more than 80 people. If we could offer them 3 to 4 meals per week, the average for most on the island, our fund will last less than one week; perhaps 2 meals. They will still starve.

You may ask, "Why do the communities not feed them?" Most families have meals on an average of 3 to 4 days a week; there are only bits to share with others, which they do. "Bits" now and then, do not sustain life. An old man who hunkers at the corner in Source a Philippe, is a skeleton with skin, and I watch as he is handed bits of food that is tucked into his ragged shorts and quickly carried to privacy.

A severely retarded man is placed in the road near Ti Palmiste with a yellow bucket, and naked, he is kicked by people and burros passing by. I doubt if money put in the yellow bucket stays long enough for someone to purchase him much food.

The gospel reading today has the disciples telling Jesus the people are hungry, and Jesus says, "so, give them something to eat." They tell him they only have \$3500.00 and that isn't nearly enough to feed them what will sustain them. Jesus then breaks loaves of bread and gives it, not to the hungry, but to the disciples.

This morning, millions of United Methodist disciples will be given broken loaves. Most will eat it, dipped in grape juice, bow briefly at the altar and return to the pew feeling touched by the Spirit of God or Jesus. How many will understand it is offered to them because millions are starving in Haiti, Bangladesh, Africa and Dulac, Louisiana?

Disciples know people are starving. Today, may we hear Jesus say, "so, feed them."

Pastor Shirley, La Gonave