



Prayer

S E R V I C E

TAKEN, BLESSED, BROKEN, AND GIVEN

The spiritual writer Henri J.M. Nouwen reminded us that four times in the Gospel, Jesus took bread, broke it, blessed it, and gave it to his disciples. In celebration of the 275-year history of the church's health and social service ministries in the United States, this prayer service, based on Nouwen's reflection, reminds us of our call to ministry to continue Jesus' mission in our world.

CALL TO PRAYER

Gracious God, provider of all our needs, you have called us into your ministry. Help us to follow the example of your Son, Jesus, who, in the breaking of the bread, restores us for work we carry on his name.

READING

Matthew 14:14-19

When he disembarked and saw the vast throng, his heart was moved with pity, and he cured their sick. As evening drew on, his disciples came to him with the suggestion: "This is a deserted place and it is already late. Dismiss the crowds so that they may go to the villages and buy some food for themselves." Jesus said to them: "There is no need for them to disperse. Give them something to eat yourselves." "We have nothing here," they replied, "but five loaves and a couple of fish." "Bring them here," he said. Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed and broke them and gave the loaves to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the people."

REFLECTION

Like the bread taken by Jesus, we are chosen by God, selected for a unique role to play in God's story. And as we recognize that we have been chosen, so also we recognize the chosen-ness of all people.

Like the bread blessed by Jesus, we, too, are blessed by God. We are called to claim our blessing and to bless others as we live each day.

Like the bread broken by Jesus, we also are broken in so many ways... in our bodies and in our hearts, in our homes and in our world. Jesus asks us to take up our cross, to claim our unique brokenness, and to join it with our blessing as we move into service to others who hurt.

Like the bread given by Jesus, we also are given. Each of our lives is a gift to those close to us: family, friends, those we serve, as well as to people we will never know. God has given us—each one of us—as a sacred gift to the world.

In silent reflection, consider how you have been taken, blessed, broken, and given in and through your life in ministry. When has this been most evident? How have you been changed by your work in service to others? How have you come to know Jesus through your service?

READING

Luke 24:30-31

When he had seated himself with them to eat, he took bread, pronounced the blessing, then broke the bread and began to distribute it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

CLOSING PRAYER

God who calls us, blesses us, and sends us into the world as gifts, we thank you. Help us always to remember the teaching of your son, Jesus, who is our example for ministry. Help us to see you each day in the faces of our sisters and brothers. Help us, too, to embrace our own brokenness, to be, in the words of your son, Henri Nouwen, "wounded healers" whom you give to a broken world. Amen.

SUGGESTED MUSIC

"Pan de Vida (Bread of Life)," OCP Publications, 1988.

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