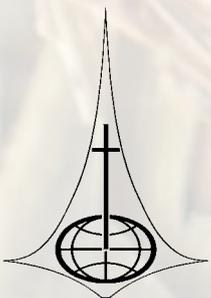




LWF ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY
STUDY MATERIALS

Day Five

Bread



The Lutheran World Federation
– A Communion of Churches



The LWF Eleventh Assembly study material takes into account the regional focus of the meeting's worship life. Each of the six brochures includes a contribution from an LWF region on "Questions worth pondering" (p. 7); a hymn (p. 8), a feature story (p. 10) related to the assembly theme "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," and information about some of the region's staple foods (p. 16).

This brochure is dedicated to the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Parallel edition in French, German and Spanish

Onzième Assemblée de la FLM, Matériel d'étude
– Cinquième jour : Le pain

Elfte LWB-Vollversammlung, Arbeitsmaterialien
– Tag Fünf: Brot

Undécima Asamblea de la FLM, Material de estudio
– Quinto día: El pan

Published by

The Lutheran World Federation
– A Communion of Churches
Office for Communication Services
150, route de Ferney,
P.O. Box 2100
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
www.lutheranworld.org

Editing, translation, revision, cover design, layout and photo research

LWF Office for Communication and Ulla Hottinen, Terry MacArthur.

Texts

Bible Studies, Devotion and Village Groups (pp. 3-6, 9 & 11-15): Erwin Buck

(Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada).

Questions (p. 7): Latin America and the Caribbean Region members of the Assembly Planning Committee Gloria Rojas Vargas (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile) and Marcelo Schneider (Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil).

Feature (p. 10): Minna Törrönen (Finn Church Aid).

Staple food information (p. 16): Miriam Reidy Prost.

Cover images

© Gilberto Quesada, Costa Rica (Background) via Morguefile.com

Logo design

Leonhardt & Kern Agency (Germany)

Right of use

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg (ELCW) & LWF

Distribution

Françoise Sotgui Bel Merabet
(fsb@lutheranworld.org)

Printed in Switzerland by SRO-Kundig on paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (www.fsc.org)



© Gilberto Quesada, Costa Rica

Bible Study Five: Bread

Give us today our daily bread (Mt 6:11)

Bread in the fourth petition (Matthew 6:11)

“Give us today our daily bread.” So we pray in the words that Jesus taught his disciples. What are we thinking of when we say these words? Depending on where we live on this earth, what language we speak and what kinds of crops grow in our soil, different pictures come to mind. In some parts of the world the food supply comes mainly out of the sea. Rice rather than wheat may be the basic crop, and the process of baking may be unknown. What does “daily bread” mean to you?

Centuries ago, Augustine in North Africa pointed out that the word “bread” in the fourth petition could mean at least three things: the natural bread that we eat, the Holy Eucharist or the word of God (the living bread from heaven, John 6:51). Ever since then, it seemed generally appropriate to think of the “daily bread” as both

physical and spiritual food. By the time Luther wrote the Small and the Large Catechisms, he had become convinced that in the fourth petition, the word “bread” was to be understood in the physical sense only. The first three petitions, he said, were devoted to the welfare of the soul, whereas in the fourth petition “we consider the poor breadbasket—the needs of our body and our life on earth” (Large Catechism 72, Kolb, p. 449), and he thought of our “daily bread” in the broadest possible terms.

Luther encouraged those who pray to expand and extend their vision to include “everything that belongs to our entire life in this world” (LC 73). In the Small Catechism he names 22 items, ranging from food to clothing, to property (including money), to people who enhance human life, to government, weather, health and reputation. He introduces the list with the words “such as” and ends it with “and

the like,” to make clear that the items he has identified represent only a portion of an almost endless list of things that nourish our physical life (Small Catechism 14, Kolb, p. 357).

Luther includes under this heading even the fields and the people through whom God provides all of these good things (LC 73, 74). The farmer, the miller and the baker play an important role in this bread-providing-chain. This attention to food-providing vocations has largely been neglected in the so-called developed countries where the consumer picks pre-packaged food from store shelves, oblivious of both the expertise and the plight of those who tend the land, plant the fields, harvest the crops and make them available for the whole world to eat.

Luther insisted that many things that do not pass through the stomach are so necessary for our physical existence that they should be included under the category “daily bread” as well. Physical hunger takes many forms. We also hunger for the human touch, for companionship, for acceptance, for love, for forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, mercy and peace. Perhaps most of all, we hunger for recognition and inclusion in the human community as contributing members in society, as individuals with dignity and self-respect. These, too, are necessary for living a fully human life.

All such things (and persons), Luther affirms, God gives “without our prayer” to all people—including “all evil people.” So, when we pray, we do not presume to persuade God to give us what we desire; rather, we acknowledge that we have already received these gifts from God. The prayer itself is an expression of gratitude. At the same time, this prayer also reminds us that these gifts, although given to us, are not our own individual and personal possession. They are intended for “us” *all* (remember Bible study two?).

Physical and material gifts are not “un-spiritual.” They are not to be considered unworthy of the Christian life. They are not something to be ashamed of or to apologize for; rather, they are gifts to be enjoyed and to be shared. Life is intended to be pleasurable for all people, even sensuous. Food deserves to be savored. Fruits and vegetables are meant to be cherished for their taste, color, texture, fragrance and appearance. Humans will be happier and healthier when they take time to taste and chew each morsel. Surely, God must be pleased when people enjoy their food, just as parents are happy when children eagerly munch the good things prepared for them. God’s gifts are bountiful and beautiful. They are meant to be celebrated. “Taste and see that the Lord is good!”

So, why do so many people on this earth die of starvation?

It seems almost like a sacrilege to talk so about the rich gifts of exquisite food and the joy of eating it, when in reality, billions of people in the world do not have even the barest of necessities to sustain life. On the other hand, how can one *not* speak in glowing terms about God’s generosity when God has prepared an almost unimaginable variety of delicious fruits and vegetables and grains for human consumption and declared all of creation to be “very good?”

Jesus’ parable of the banquet seems like a fitting text to shed light on this dilemma.

The parable of the banquet (Luke 14:15-24)

The invitation

“Come; for everything is ready now.” (Lk 14:17)

They knew that this invitation was coming. They had been invited (14:17) some days earlier, as was the custom. The host would send a preliminary invitation to determine who could come to a feast. Such knowledge would help the host determine how big a tent must be set up, how much fresh meat the butcher must have ready, how much wine. Of course, the potential guests were not obligated to accept that first invitation. Sometimes there are good reasons for saying no. The host would understand. The answer “sorry, I have a conflict,” does not need to leave hard feelings.

Banquet preparations

This banquet was evidently going to be a big affair. “Many” (14:16) had agreed to come. Preparations for such a feast were often elaborate. Matthew, relating a similar banquet story (22:4), mentions the killing of oxen and fat calves in preparation for the feast. At the wedding banquet at Cana the steward reminds the bridegroom that it is the custom to serve the best wine first, while the guests can still appreciate the difference between prime quality wine and wine of inferior vintage (Jn 2:10). Such feasts tended to be quite sumptuous.

But food and wine were only a part of an enjoyable banquet. Such feasts were social events. Who will all be there? No doubt there will be lively entertainment, music and dancing—and a lot of good conversation. Such banquets are prestigious community-building events; they fulfilled purposes that went far beyond the

consumption of food and drink. A banquet was the time and place for telling and hearing each others' stories, for commenting on the affairs of the day, for sharing each others' joys (as well as pain). In the days before cell phones and cable TV, the banquet was an important channel for staying connected.

A rude awakening

Finally, everything is ready. Open the door and invite the guests to come in! But . . . there are no guests! They **all** had gone back on their promises. Incredible! They evidently had never intended to come in the first place. An outright snub! Of course, they all had their excuses. Only three of them are recorded as samples of the sorts of things that were said to cover up the fact that those invited were really not interested.

One had bought a field and “must” beg to be excused (v. 18). Had he not looked that field over carefully before making the purchase? Another did not even bother with an “I must” excuse (v. 19). He simply informs the host that he is on his way to try out the five teams of newly acquired oxen. Was the banquet not worth postponing the field inspection and the oxen test by a day or two? Yes, such feasts often lasted for several days, but even so . . .

The third person “cannot come” because he has just been married (v. 20). True, the spouse could not accompany her husband. Such banquets were “for men only” affairs. The rules of hospitality can be rather strict, but not honoring one's prior commitment to attend a banquet was considered a breach of hospitality, too. Would people not *want* to be there?

Understandably, the host was not amused (v. 21). Public humiliation was one of the worst kinds of exclusion and rejection. The host now experiences first-hand what it means to be marginalized. And he is not happy.

The celebration

What now? No doubt the host wanted to avoid being exposed to still greater humiliation by cancelling a banquet that had been boycotted. It had been announced, so there will be a banquet. “Go out quickly! Invite anyone! The more the merrier. We will have good food, good wine, happy dancing and lively conversation. And we will get to know and appreciate strangers who will soon be friends. Come to think of it: perhaps these are the people we should have invited in the first place! Had Jesus not advised would-be hosts to invite people who are usually forgotten?”

All was ready. The food had been acquired and prepared, the servants had been engaged, the hall was decorated. Only people—hungry people—were still lacking. “Go, quickly! Call! Invite! Let's celebrate!”

As for the originally invited guests? Well . . . ? They will never know what they missed (14:24). Tragic, but true.

Rearranging one's priorities

That's the story. How does it fit into the larger framework of the Third Gospel? What is it doing precisely at this point in the gospel? Let's look at this again.

The parable is skillfully tied into its context in the Third Gospel. Immediately *preceding* this parable, Luke relates instructions of Jesus about how to arrange a banquet (Lk 14:7-14), and immediately *following* the parable, Luke reminds the reader how Jesus emphasized the cost of discipleship (Lk 14:25-35). That arrangement is evidently deliberate. It must have a definite purpose. What is the connection, the *red thread* running through these three segments in the Third Gospel? Let us try to trace it.

Humility and hospitality (preceding the parable) (Luke 14:7-14)

Observing how at a banquet the guests were jockeying for places of prominence, Jesus reflects about competitiveness—the deep-seated drive to improve one's relative position in society. He concludes with a pointed lesson to the host who had invited him:

“When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. . . .” (Lk 14:12-14)

But this is precisely what the host in this parable did *not* intend to do!

Readers of Bible stories—especially of the parables of Jesus—should not too quickly assume that the main actor in the story represents God. Often the opposite is true: The “lord” in a given story may be a foreign landlord who abuses the peasants who work the land for him. The employer in another story may be just that: an ordinary human employer—but one with a social conscience. The rich host in our story may well be a prominent resident in the town who makes mistakes like most



© Finnchurhaid/Katja Tähjä

of us do, and from whose mistakes we can learn something.

The parable of the great dinner (Luke 14:15-24)

See the *red thread* that ties this story to what precedes? In contrast to what Jesus had just said, the host in this parable invited rich friends and neighbors to the banquet—people who could afford to add another field to their property or buy five yoke of oxen—ten additional oxen?! They were well off! These so-called friends were not friends at all, the host discovered all too late. Although they had accepted the first invitation, they did not really want to come—not even out of a sense of obligation to keep their former promise. That experience left the host humiliated and angry.

In his embarrassment, the host tried to save face by inviting others. But not just any others; he specifically requested the inclusion of “the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind,” just as Jesus had earlier encouraged hosts to do (Lk 14:13). The host probably did that out of anger or spite—as his sharp exclamation seems to suggest: “I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner!” Whatever his motivation, the host now did the right thing. He invited the marginalized, those who really longed for what he had to offer.

The cost of discipleship (following the parable) (Luke 14:25-35)

Where does the *red thread* lead now? In the very next verses Luke reminds the reader of the words that Jesus had spoken to a large crowd of people who travelled with him. “You cannot

be my disciples unless you love me more than you do parents, children, friends and even life itself” (paraphrasing Lk 14:26). To love Jesus is, of course, to love those with whom Jesus regularly associates. For a disciple to do otherwise would be to become like de-salted salt (14:34f).

Discipleship shines brightest when followers of Jesus joyfully relinquish their position of privilege and are prepared to be humiliated themselves by joining those who are regularly being excluded: the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind—the marginalized. These are the people with whom Jesus felt a special kinship. These are the “family” of Jesus (cf. Mk 3:33f).

The banquet is a fitting image of life with God. It offers people an opportunity to celebrate the rich variety of God’s delectable gifts in company with others who are themselves gifts to one another. The food is excellent, but a banquet is people—all sorts of them—celebrating!

Although the host may still be upset, the parable ends on a jubilant note: the marginalized, the poor and hungry, have access to the gifts God has provided for all creatures! This world is not a hopeless place! There is food for all! This banquet has become the Table of the Lord!

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Rom 12:1-2)

From the Latin America and Caribbean region

Questions worth pondering

Bread

Latin America is one of the main cradles of claims for justice and transformative development.

Did the theological approaches of the contextual theologies coming from this particular continent, especially regarding the search for justice and fair distribution of “bread” influenced the theologies developed in your region?

Invitations

What are the invitations being sent out today? Are such invitations inclusive enough to the point that they consider and welcome indigenous people, women and people with disabilities, youth, elderly, and children and sexual minorities? Are we, as part of a Lutheran communion of churches, sending invitations and welcoming the wider Christian family and, at the same time, being attentive to the invitations we receive?

Banquet

Today we witness wealthy groups offering banquets to selected groups.

Can we describe the unfair distribution of wealth, which is one of the main aspects of the ongoing global economic structure, as a banquet to which few are invited? In this sense, who are those offering the banquet? Who are those that are not being invited? What is expected of the church’s prophetic voice?

Rearranging priorities: diakonia

We just read that this world is not a hopeless place and that there is food for all. The poor keep asking: Who has my share of food? Such question makes us reflect on the effectiveness of our diaconal work. The conceptual foundation of ecumenical cooperation tends to segregate key elements of the life of the church. In Latin America, most of the churches try to respond to the different “hungers” of the people on the margins and see such a challenge linked with aspects of spirituality.

Can we talk of a spiritual dimension in development strategies that could also become an indicator of the effectiveness of aid?



© Gilberto Quesada, Costa Rica

From Brazil

Hymn

After a poem by Elsa Tamez (Costa Rica)

Flavio Irala (Brazil)



1. Come for cel - e - brat - ing the sup - per of the Lord. To - geth - er we will bake an e -
 2. Quick - ly we should fol - low the re - ci - pe of Christ. To - geth - er we will knead the
 1. Ve - nhan, ce - le - bre - mos a cei - a do Se - nhor. Fa - ça - mos to - dos jun - tos
 2. Pron - to. Si - ga - mos a re - cei - ta do Se - nhor. Ba - ta - mos to - dos jun - tos a



nor - mous loaf of bread. We make wine that ov - er - flows like in Ca - na long a - go.
 dough with lov - ing hands. We will watch with joy - ful eyes - the ris - ing of the bread.
 um e - nor - me pão; pre - pa - re - mos mui - to vi - nho, co - mo em Ca - ná.
 mas - sa com as mãos, e ve - re - mos com ale - gri - a como cres - ce o pão.



Sure - ly the wo - men won't for - get the salt; and the men will glad - ly bring the yeast.
 Sure - ly the men will not for - get the flour, and the wo - men slow - ly add the wat - er.
 Que as mu - lhe - res não es - que - çam o sal e os ho - mens tra - gam o fer - men - to.



Let's send out man - y in - vit - ta - tions to the blind, the wound - ed the out - cast, the
 Que ve - nham mui - tos con - vi - da - dos: ce - gos, sur - dos, co - xos, pre - sos,



poor. Let's send out man - y in - vit - ta - tions to the blind, the
 po - bres. Que ve - nham mui - tos con - vi - da - dos: ce - gos, sur - dos,



wound - ed the out - cast, the poor. 3. So this ver - y day we cel - e - brate.
 co - xos, pre - sos, po - bres. 3. Por - que ho - je ce - le - bra - mos



Je - sus meets us face to face. Now as Christ's own bo - dy we com - mit our lives to God's
 o en - con - tro com Je - sus. Ho - je re - no - va - mos nos - so com - por - mis - so com o



king - dom. No more will a child be hun - gry. No more will a man be
 Rei - no. Nin - guém fi - ca - rá com fo - me, Nin - guém fi - ca - rá com



hun - gry No more, will a wo - man be hun - gry. No more. No more.
 fo - me, Nin - guém fi - ca - rá com fo - me, nin - guém. nin - guém

English: Terry MacArthur



© Ryan Whisner

Devotion

Guess who's coming to dinner!

"Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today" (Lk 19:5).

What an honor! Think of it!

I clambered down the tree, rushed home and alerted the family. We hurriedly cleaned up the house, took out the best dishes and cutlery, picked up a bottle of wine and went to work cooking our favorite dinner.

The guest was delayed. Many wanted to talk to him ... wanting to know whether he had any run-ins with the government or the police (he did, with both!) and whether he felt safe in these surroundings. Safe? Well, he felt safe in the hands of God, but he was sure that the authorities would track him down, arrest him and ...

Might he get deported? He was hoping not, since a prophet is not welcome in his home country. He thought he stood a better chance of getting justice here than in his homeland, but ... "Your country is very quick to deport people," he said. We know. Just the other day ... a young man from Myanmar ...

We prayed (and still pray): "God, open our hearts to hear and to respond to the manifold hunger in the land."

"... some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hb 13:2)

"... as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me." (Mt 25:40)

Feature

Haiti: Children come first

Children come first in the village of Couchavel in mountainous western Haiti, where the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is working alongside struggling families.

The village is waking up. A cock crows and women are lighting up fire in the kitchen huts. Elphise Delya and her daughter Lucia, prepare breakfast—pumpkin, banana and coffee. Since the rain water supply dried up, Lucia fetches water from several kilometers away.

Her younger sisters are ready to go to school in the neighboring village of Desbagnes.



Agnedu Olmy and Elphise Delya are beside their home in the village of Couchavel, in the district of Macaya, Grand Ans, western Haiti. © Finn Church Aid/Minna Törrönen

Their father, Agnedu Olmy, a daily farm laborer, drinks his coffee and eats steamed banana. When nobody needs help, he tends to the family field, though it does not yield enough corn and beans to support the household. Erosion has weakened the soil, and storms have destroyed the crops. A day's work for others earns him a few dollars and a meal. But lately there has been little work, because of the destruction by the storms.

Elphise tends the village teacher's plot, growing sweet potato, taro tuber (malangá) and pumpkin. The money she earns pays their children's school fees.

"At times it is really hard, when we do not manage to provide enough food for the family. However, children come first. We grown-ups can go without food for a while, but we always find something for the children," says Olmy.

Environmental problems and resulting natural disasters, especially storms and erosion, affect food availability for an estimated two million Haitians.

The Olmy family along with many others is dependent on imported rice, flour and sugar. Sixty percent of food in Haiti is imported.

Only two percent of the country's forests still remain following decades of unsustainable forestry. This has led to soil erosion and dwindling water resources. Because of the erosion, tropical storms—more frequent due to climate change—have been devastating.

The Olmy family plots were destroyed and their farm animals died in the 2008 autumn storms.

Life has been difficult.

However, today, LWF project workers are conducting interviews in the area to determine how to help the vulnerable families.

The people of Couchavel can receive training on how to make the land productive again by using composted soil. Villagers will be trained to prepare for storms and natural catastrophes. About 150 families will get a goat or chickens to raise. Water reservoirs will be built.

Olmy is hopeful. He knows that it is possible to prepare for storms and that after the turbulence the earth produces wild plants. "Those leaves and grass are salted and eaten, and at first, that is how we survive. As soon as it is possible, we will start to cultivate the land again."

The theme of the day

Bread

During our morning worship today we marvelled at the all-comprehensive care with which God dignifies the total human being, body, mind, emotions and all—irrespective of the moral character or past performance of any one individual. All are invited to the banquet where people will exchange their various God-given gifts: stories, laughter, encouragement, signs of friendship, besides food. Sing! Dance! Enjoy! Taste and see that the Lord is good!

As we meet in the various Village Groups today, let us remind one another of that generous invitation to the banquet, remembering those who are often left out.

Village Group 1: Good soil – Clean water

Just distribution: “who among us hungers?”

Getting our bearings

- ☞ Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands out for you as something to pursue further?

Faces of hunger

Hunger is not always a craving for food. As Luther explains, the food for which we pray includes matters concerning relationships and general quality of life. Most of the inhabitants of the earth are not at the point of starvation, but all too many people are, and they are often in desperate need of immediate intervention. One in every seven persons in the world goes to bed hungry. Ten million people die of starvation every year. Statistics for other types of hunger—such as emotional, intellectual or spiritual hungers—are difficult to come by, but the suffering is equally real.

- ☞ Please speak about the faces of hunger in your home community. What kinds of hunger are in most urgent need of attention?

People at risk

The hungry, the poor, the ignored, the lonely and the otherwise marginalized all suffer from various kinds of deprivation. Some people are more vulnerable than others, but poverty itself comes in many shapes and sizes.

Women and children (especially *orphaned children*) are most likely to suffer hunger as well as violations of their human rights. Their hunger is at least twofold: they long for both food and justice. Women are still paid less than men are, and they are usually less respected and have fewer options for promoting their own personal growth, especially if they happen to be single parents. *Youth* often cannot find satisfying jobs, suffer from depression and hopelessness—and often they are addicted to the use of alcohol and drugs.

Ethnic minorities are particularly hard pressed. *Migrants* are away from home for much of their life, do back-breaking work, encounter language barriers and often live in low-grade housing. *Refugees* and those *imprisoned for political reasons* carry the additional stigma of loss of freedom, reputation and personal dignity. *Sexual minorities* are often made to feel like second class citizens and are subject to prejudice and stereotyping, as are *persons living with HIV*.

- ☞ Please talk about this: Who are the most marginalized people in your country? What kinds of stereotyping are especially painful and unjust and can be eliminated?

Causes of deprivation

Most countries have enough food to meet the needs of all their citizens. The chief problem appears to be not supply but *distribution*. And just distribution is frequently impeded by widespread corruption, greed and self-interest. The gap between rich and poor is getting wider rather than narrower. “When the rich are hungry, the poor are dying,” but all are experiencing some type of deprivation.

- ☞ Please share your stories: What conditions and policies in your country stand in the way of a more just and equitable distribution of goods? Why are they not changed, and what can be done about that?

Restorative justice

No one should have to go to bed hungry. Access to food is a human right and human dignity is a gift of the creator who made humans as a self-reflection. What can be an appropriate response to the unequal distribution of wealth that still fragments humanity? How does one live in tension with deep-seated human hunger on the one hand, and God’s rich gifts on the other?

Paul exhorts the church at Corinth: “. . . it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.” (2 Cor 8:13b-14)

☞ Please discuss: Since starvation is evidently a symptom of a still more deep-seated sickness, how is the church equipped to deal with that disease?

“. . . let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

Gal 6:10b

**Village Group 2:
Sowing**

Human trafficking

Getting our bearings

☞ Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands out for you as something to pursue further?

Trafficking: modern day slavery

Human trafficking has been called one of the 21st century’s worst social afflictions, showing human nature’s ugliest side. It is also thought to be the world’s fastest growing industry. Trafficking takes many different forms, all of which amount to one thing: the shipping

of persons by *force* or *deception* for the purpose of *exploitation*.

Trafficking deprives humans of their freedom and their human rights. It turns humans into sexual objects, forced laborers, domestic slaves and worse. It amounts to a vile abuse of power, robbing the neighbors of the dignity that rightly belongs to them as creatures made in the image of God. It is an evil that should perturb Christians deeply.

The clever trafficker knows how to trick the victim by painting an attractive picture of good times ahead. The unsuspecting victims then discover too late that they have fallen into a trap. The promised good job turns out to be a prison from which there is little hope of escape, while the captive gets beaten into submission.

Accurate statistics are almost impossible to obtain: the victims are trapped, beaten into submission and not allowed to speak out publicly. The problem is of staggering proportions. An estimated 45 billion dollars are changing hands annually. Millions of children alone are working around the world—very often under unsafe and unhealthy conditions. An estimated 70 percent of trafficked individuals are women and girls, and some 50 percent are minors—all disempowered people who make easy targets.

☞ Please discuss: How does human trafficking affect people in your part of the world? How widespread and how visible are the abuses caused by human trafficking?

Root causes of trafficking

The causes of trafficking are rooted in depressing economic conditions, breeding grounds for unscrupulous buyers to bargain with desperate parents for as little as 200 dollars for one of their children.

According to recent research, the chief factors that lead people to become victims of trafficking are the following.

- their lack of awareness of the dangers to which they will be exposed;
- their poverty, caused by economic policies that keep the poor forever poor;
- their own desire to make a better life for themselves and their families;
- their lack of education which restricts them to work as unskilled laborers;
- the corruption in the country that allows traffickers to bribe officials;
- the culture of the land expecting children to contribute to the family’s upkeep.

☞ Please discuss: If the above is a representative list of causes, what might be some effective ways to at least reduce the danger of human trafficking?

Trafficking as a pandemic

Every country is affected, either as the source country (the poverty-stricken place from which persons are trafficked), transition country (where they stop over), or the destination country (the region which eventually markets their services). According to UNICEF, the affluent countries of Europe are prime consumers of child trafficking. Other preferred destination regions are the USA, Asia and the Middle East. The Republic of Moldova, with an unemployment rate as high as 68 percent and with about 10 percent of its female population sold abroad into prostitution, is an example of a source country.

Human trafficking is an international crime. It will require international commitment to eradicate it.

☞ Please discuss: Governments are obligated to protect the

human rights of their citizens: What should people be able to expect from them, and what opportunities are open for the church to help stem the tide of human trafficking?

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness...

I have given you as a covenant to the people...

to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the
dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in
darkness.

Isa 42:6f.

Village Group 3: Growth – Harvest

Diakonia as reaction to exclusion

Getting our bearings

- Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands out for you as something to pursue further?

Diakonia: a way of life

Many churches use the term *diakonia* to designate their caring ministry, although the practice of diakonia has been changing. In some countries diaconal ministry is viewed as a profession for specially-trained and rostered persons. In order to facilitate a shared reflection on this within the Lutheran Communion, the LWF has recently produced a document called *Diakonia in Context* (LWF, 2009).

This document refers to diakonia as a “vocation of inclusiveness” (p. 23) and an “alternative way of being human” (p. 14). These two phrases aptly summarize a style of life that endeavors to be faithful to the gospel. Diaconal ministry

is deeply rooted in faith in the Triune God, the never-ending love of Christ and the hope that springs from both. The key feature of this ministry is its commitment to *inclusiveness* and *mutuality*.

People serving people serving God

Inclusiveness

The LWF contribution affirms the God-given dignity of all human beings as the starting point for diaconal ministry. Diaconal ministry reaches out to all people who are in need of care, regardless of color, race, gender, age and even of religious belief. Diakonia refrains from taking advantage of people’s vulnerability by attempting to proselytize.

The inclusiveness of diakonia finds further expression in the firm belief that this vocation is intended as a way of life for all the baptized, regardless of professional training—a conviction that is deeply rooted in the Lutheran understanding of the priesthood of all believers. Diakonia is an integral part of being the church. It is a vocation that anyone can exercise effectively. Most often diaconal work is done by “ordinary people” and should therefore not be regarded as a vocation intended primarily for specialists or professionals. Of course, in the case of diaconal institutions, professional competence and leadership is required. However, the vocation of diakonia is not hierarchical in nature.

Mutuality

Diakonia is an exercise of caring for one another as equals, where all hold themselves accountable to one another. The one who provides care and the one who receives it stand together on the same level. They both exercise care of the other. It would be paternalistic to suggest that the two differ in terms of status. Neither one of them works for

people. Both work with people. One does not think of a self-sufficient provider offering care to a needy recipient. Both are fragile human beings in need of caring and transformation. Each is a blessing to the other.

Diakonia: characteristic ways of being

Diaconal ministry is mutual *accompaniment*, walking together as one negotiates various steps in life. As a *ministry of reconciliation*, diakonia is patterned after God’s own reconciliation with the world (2 Cor 5:19). As a ministry of *empowering*, diakonia employs power not *over* people but *for* them. As a “*culture of listening*,” diakonia is a ministry of simple presence, offered unconditionally.

Diaconal work can also perform a prophetic function when it announces an alternative way of being human as a means of transforming society (Rom 12:2), or when it *denounces injustice* in defense of the marginalized.

On the ecumenical and the interfaith level, diakonia fosters the building of bridges within the church as well as to other faiths.

Questions

- How does this view of diakonia reflect your experience and the way the Christian lifestyle is portrayed in your church?
- What challenges the church to diaconal action in your country, and in what way are such challenges responded to?
- How desirable is it that we overcome the mind-set that contrasts caregivers and receivers of care? How do you promote a more inclusive understanding of mutual caring?
- Do you deal with tension between ministry as listening and ministry as a prophetic

call to mutual responsibility? How do you balance “comforting the afflicted” and “afflicting the comfortable?”

Village Group 4: Processing what is harvested

Food and culture

Getting our bearings

- Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands out for you as something to pursue further?

They eat what?!

There are large variations between menus of various cultures. Every culture has its own specialties and food customarily eaten by one group may not be considered edible by another.

- Please talk about this: Can you identify regions or cultures where the following are (or are not) acceptable as items of food? Whale blubber, porcupine, fried insects, sweet and sour meat, guinea pig, kangaroo, beef, pork, fresh blood, blood sausage, horse meat, rat, rabbit, fresh raw flesh. Could you add similar items from your part of the world?

A menu trip through the Bible

In the beginning: The first chapter of the Bible identifies what people are to eat (Gen 1:29). To humans God gave every plant that bears seed, and every fruit that has seed in it. Paradise enjoyed a vegetarian menu.

After the flood: God soon augmented the menu to include meat. “Every moving thing that lives

shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I [now] give you everything.” But there is one exception. “Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (9:3-4).

Levitical food laws: With Leviticus came many dietary restrictions (Lev 20:24-25). The categories “clean” (permitted) and “unclean” (not permitted) were introduced, along with a list of food items under each category (Lev 11:1-23). Eating unclean food was an “abomination” (Lev 20:25). The matter was serious.

The Apostolic Age: Peter’s vision and the words of the voice “what God has made clean, you must not call profane” (Acts 10:15) represented a breakthrough: the Levitical distinctions regarding food were set aside. The menu had been changed.

Food, faith and family

Whether or not a given item appeared on the menu of a culture group probably had more to do with group identity than any health concerns. What one eats and with whom one eats it are closely linked. Leviticus, introducing the categories of clean and unclean food, spelled out why. God said I “have separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean” (20:24f.). Israel’s menu was to remind them whose they are and so it was religious rather than nutritional or hygienic reasons that determined what humans might eat. Animals such as the hare and the wild pig, for instance, were probably omitted chiefly because they were eaten by the Canaanites. As God’s chosen people, the Israelites ate food that distinguished them from those who worshipped other gods. Their daily food served to remind them of their identity and to protect them from losing that.

By removing the menu distinctions between clean and unclean

foods, Greeks and Jews can now constitute one people, one church. Group identity is no longer to be measured by menu, but by membership in the body of Christ. Followers of Jesus can now eat what the “others” are eating—they can exchange recipes without jeopardizing their cultural heritage. What formerly divided them from eating at the same table (including the Eucharistic table) can now serve to enrich their new and inclusive community. Note the recent LWF publication of stories and recipes *Food for Life*.

- Talk about this: By eating foods traditionally associated with “foreign” countries, are we indicating that we are on the way toward recognizing each other as members of one “family?”
- How can people preserve their cultural heritage at a time when globalization and migration is bringing about the formation of a new culture? Should they want to?
- Some faith communities still consider what they eat as a core requirement of their religious identity. How should the church relate to such groups from the perspective of the freedom of the gospel?

Village Group 5: Breaking the bread – Sharing solidarity

Communication

Getting our bearings

- Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands

out for you as something to pursue further?

Communication today

Many exciting developments are taking place in the area of communication. The digital world is expanding quickly. Computers are becoming more powerful but also smaller and cheaper. More sophisticated software is steadily becoming faster and more user-friendly.

The Lutheran World Federation document *A Communicative Communion* (2003) interprets the term *communication* as “a reciprocal process of giving and receiving of information . . . [that leads to] mutual deliberation . . . and new insight.” But the document also observes that most people in the world have never used telephone, TV or Internet, and in the global South there are few technical communication facilities, so that the new technology is accessible only to a few.

That was the situation seven years ago. Since then we have heard about massive changes in many places. The cell-phone, we are told, has become the common form of communication, and is now used not only for sharing of information, but for sending pictures, videos, and even money over long distances.

➤ Please tell : How well does the above describe your own situation? How common is the use of e-mail, web-browsing, cell phones, Facebook, YouTube or blogging? No doubt, for those who are starving, even

the cheaper technology is still out of reach.

Communication by radio

LWF has found that radio is still the most common tool for communication in the places where people work. Most electronic devices can be powered by solar energy or by manual generation of electricity. Drawbacks of radio include: it provides only one-way communication from radio station to listener, and it usually provides mostly music, advertising, and propaganda. In some areas radio is used very effectively for public discussion of controversial issues, especially if listeners can participate in the discussion by calling in.

➤ Please discuss: what other advantages and drawbacks can you see in the use of radio technology? Could broadcasters be persuaded to air more educational programming of practical usefulness for persons such as yourself?

Distance education

The Internet lends itself to exciting new ways of delivering education without either teacher or learner leaving their home. With free software programs such as Skype, teacher and students can even see, hear and speak to each other over the internet. Courses (or individual study projects) can be designed to be used by students who meet in a “virtual classroom” in space where they can communicate with their classmates. In some areas schools are now making plans for offering such Internet-based

education in case of a sudden severe outbreak of the H1N1 flu. The cost of such communication can be surprisingly low, but the enterprise does require access to a computer and a service provider—a major drawback for many.

➤ Please talk about this: How could this technology be used in your area and climate to further such goals as community building, decision-making and education? How might the church take advantage of such possibilities?

Your connection with the outside world

The internet and specifically the cell phone make possible a whole new era in communication. One person at the right place and at the right time can capture important incidents on tape for public dissemination. Some TV networks will even air such tapes on the national news network. Natural disasters as well as crimes in progress and encounters between demonstrators and police can be recorded and sent out to the rest of the world in seconds, triggering an almost immediate response from the public and from governments. One recent headline read: “Oppressors fear the cell-phone.”

➤ Please discuss: How can you maximize the positive and minimize the negative effects of digital technology? In what ways can such tools help you become better-informed and more effective Christian citizens?



© Gilberto Quesada, Costa Rica



A staple food

Maize

“Never sell or give away the first fruits of the maize harvest.” (Quiché* saying)

Maize or corn is widely cultivated throughout the world and a greater quantity is produced each year than any other grain. A food staple in much of South and Central America, it provides an important source of carbohydrates, vitamin B and minerals, and compares favorably with root and tuber crops as an energy source. But it is a poor protein food. In Central and South America, maize meal is the main ingredient in bread or tortillas; maize can also be eaten when the kernels are still soft.

Thought to have originated in either Mexico or Central America, some of the earliest traces

of maize date back about 7,000 years. It has been greatly honored for its ability to provide not only food but shelter, fuel, decoration and more. Because of its vital role in many native cultures, it was one of the important icons in the mythological traditions of the Mayan, Aztec and Incan civilizations.

Other South American staples range from rice and beans in Central America, to potatoes in the highlands of Peru and Ecuador, to grilled meat in Argentina (where people eat more beef per capita than any other country in the world), while the staple diet of most Caribbean islanders today includes breadfruit, cassava, sweet potatoes, yams, plantains, bananas and corn meal.

Coffee is a major beverage throughout the continent while maté, a caffeinated, tea-like beverage, is mainly popular in the southern region.

** The Quiché people are Mayan Indians living in the midwestern highlands of Guatemala.*