



# Creation Season

**Proper 22, Year A, October 5, 2008**

*Special Recognition of the Place of Food in our Lives  
Food as Commodity*

Information and Reflections for Homilists, Liturgists, and Clergy of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota

## Revised Common Lectionary Readings:

**Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20**  
Isaiah 5:1-7

**Psalm 19**  
Psalm 80: 7-14

**Philippians 3: 4b-14 Matthew 21: 33 - 46**

(focus is on the bolded readings)

## Reflections and Discussion Questions

The Commandments established a code for the Israelites. Some are about their relationship to God and the rest concern relationships to each other. Together the commandments held the Hebrews and hold us accountable to God and each other in our daily lives. Jesus' proclamation to be fulfillment of the law move us to always examine our goals and our commitments.

The Hebrews felt some responsibility for allowing the poor to eat. The margins of the fields were left for the poor to glean as Ruth did in Boaz's fields. How are we responsible for the food for the poor? We have soup kitchens and food shelves and many churches participate in them. Many large corporations and small donate to these from their excess. But how do our national laws of commodity trading, large corporation sales and food shipments, packaging, our farm subsidy programs and our reliance on fewer and fewer small businesses help to alleviate the hunger of the poor and support those of middle income.

I have cooked and served in a local Duluth, Minnesota soup kitchen, The Damiano Center, for 26 years, also serving for five of the years on the board. My *learning curve* about how our foods are produced effect the lives of the very poor was intensified on that board. My awareness continues as I watch the faces of those who come to eat. They are younger, many more women and children now attend. An additional program now involves children for summer and after school activities . People glean from gardens, party left overs, grocery overstocks and all sorts of donations to feed the poor in Duluth since the soup kitchen opened in 1982.

Duluth used to export summer berries and fish from Lake Superior. There is only one commercial fisherman left in the area, although there is sport fishing. There are also a couple of small commercial jam and jelly canneries and two microbreweries. There are farmers markets and a slowly growing number of community farms.

The new reliance on ethanol as automobile fuel has changed many midwest farm lands to fuel production and away from food production. How has that impacted the cost of food for all global people, not just

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## *Special Recognition of the Place of Food in our Lives – Food as Commodity*

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Americans? Many tons of grain are shipped from the Duluth port, especially to foreign countries. Just this year three of the large grain elevators have changed hands as global food commodity trading has increased while other forms of investment have decreased.

A recent *Duluth News Tribune* issue August 12, 2008 contained two articles concerning food production and marketing. One was an Associated Press article by Rachel Zoll concerning the issues of keeping kosher in food production in order to meet Jewish dietary laws; and the major issue was the employment of illegal immigrants. This is especially true in some slaughterhouses.

The second article by *St. Paul Pioneer Press* writer, Tom Webb concerned the Gargill Company's attempts to develop better, healthier, nutritious foods that contain fewer additives.

Both of these articles indicate the efforts of food producers to improve in their own efforts to produce and comply, both complicated issues.

In the gospel Jesus' parable clearly uses the metaphors of food growth and harvest to speak to his time and context. What are the messages that these food reflections raise? What are the foods that your local region produces or that you can grow yourself? What are our responsibilities to God and to our neighbors to help each other be fed adequately? What are the connections? Who is employed? What are we eating? What passes along? What can we grow or not eat ourselves to reduce fuel use?

Excellent reference for reflections and study guide is *Food and Faith*, edited and compiled by Michael Schut (Living the Good News a division of The Morehouse Group).

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The Minnesota Episcopal Environmental Stewardship Commission (MEESC) has prepared Creation Season materials for Propers 22-25, Year A, with a focus on food. If you find the information on this reflection to be of interest, you may wish to visit the MEESC website for more information ([www.env-steward.com](http://www.env-steward.com)). Members of MEESC are available to visit your congregation to assist you and them in an environmental stewardship walk.