

Foreword

Christine Vladimiroff, OSB

I recall from my childhood a part of my Russian heritage, a ceremonial blessing exchanged by host and guest: “Bread, that this house may never know hunger, salt, that life may always have savor.” The reader of this book will be the recipient of another rich blessing with both the substance and flavor of the hermeneutic of hunger.

You are both host and guest in a communal exegesis on hunger. A host because this book is a call to be a coparticipant in uncovering the revelatory content of Scripture, and a guest, as it is also an invitation to sit still and to reflect on the suffering and privation of the time.

These pages present mothers in anguish, unable to feed their children; animals, emaciated, starving; the parched earth ravaged by the greed and contempt of those who walked its surface in that other time. It was another time—wasn't it?

You will come into a space of searching for meaning and relevance. What is the experience of God in desolation? It is not difficult to make the transition to the sociopolitical time we inhabit. You may begin to view hunger from the eyes of the hungry that

you see on the streets where you live, in the soup kitchens and pantries where you serve, poverty in the coin you give the beggar with dirty, outstretched hand. The authors engage you to make the practical application, to begin your walk through the reality of your life, your place and time. You may come to realize the importance of perceiving (with a critical eye) the antagonism between a person's life and his or her conscience. Indifference becomes an unacceptable luxury when one reads the Scripture through the hearts of those for whom a bit of bread is an experience of God.

The reader is led through the biblical accounts of prophets warning a people of their errant ways, consoling a people with a glimpse of a compassionate God. The lamentations echo the human search for meaning in suffering and the enduring hope that anchors one to the reality of a future different from the suffering of the present. The kaleidoscope of images from past to present is the background with which we participate in communal exegesis. Transformation will not take place unless we sit with the text in the sociopolitical reality that is the context of our lives. The mystical experience of God invites us to enter into the text and our reality simultaneously. We are not to be silent bystanders. Blinders must be removed, for shadows must not obscure our sight as we read the text in our cultural situation. The blessing I give you, reader: "Bread that you may never know hunger, salt that your life may always have savor, courage that you may never turn away from the hunger of any other, and gratitude to the God who cares for us all, who nourishes all creation with love and beauty."