



LET US BREAK BREAD TOGETHER

One of the periods of American history to which none of us ever wish to return is that time when some of our people because of the color of their skin were slaves and were owned by other persons. They were held in bondage as slaves and sold from person to person, farm to farm, with little hope of ever being free to make their own decisions in life.

Over 100 years ago the war we call *The Civil War* between the North and South sections of our country abolished this terrible custom of slavery.

However bad and terrible as this practice was, a very beautiful and good musical thing did come out of it. Songs made up by those slaves – the black people – became known as *Negro Spirituals*. These spirituals had words that were exceedingly simple yet direct and meaningful. The songs all reflected their religious beliefs and a very great depth of feeling when these spirituals were sung.

The music – the melodies – also were simple but haunting and beautiful. They were memorable tunes that seemed to come up out of the black persons' very souls – as they truly did. Most of the melodies had phrases that often were repeated several times yet never seemed to become monotonous.

As with all the spirituals, neither the author of the words nor the composer of the tune were known. Both text and melody seemed to spring up from all the black people almost together. One, who may have been more of a leader, would begin the first phrase and beginning melody and all who were working close to him, in the fields, in the barn, the workshop, or whatever, would join in and compose melody and words seemingly as they sang along.

“Let us break bread together on our knees” is one of the few truly Communion Hymns coming from the black culture. Both words and music are at the same time simple and profound. The refrain reminds us of the publican's prayer told about by Jesus: “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” Look up and read the story of the Pharisee and the Publican in the 18th Chapter of Luke.