

Bread of Life

Jesus is enthusiastic to be with us, as the embodiment of how much Abba loves creation – eager to share this, not by knowledge but by bringing *a new way of experiencing being a fully alive human being*. There are hungers of all kinds around us – not just for food, but for friendship, for peace, for welcome... Jesus satisfies all hunger.

Hunger is not an abstract reality – we are hungry people – and he can only get to us through hearts and hands willingly there to allow him to be there. Though he will die in the process, as will his followers – he brings a life that death can never touch.

The full implication of this has yet to become our own conscious experience. We have, as yet, no *experience [only information]* of the fullness of his dying and rising. This has yet to happen for us, though there is already an effect; since the gift of eternal life does not require some form of post-mortem experience.

There is no such thing as going up to heaven to find this new life – it is with us already. In this world of so much living and dying we have the offer - *I am the living bread...* another way of saying the Father is totally self-giving, through the Word received and welcomed – the Word does likewise, gives what is totally my *flesh for the life of the world*. His critics said God could do this – but this man? There is nothing allegorical here. Faith does not have to transport itself to some ethereal out-of-this-world experience.

Food and drink suggest something already familiar – our need for sustenance now, for a life that carries us beyond the confines of death, by transforming the very meaning of dying, with all hungers guaranteed satisfaction.

Hunger only becomes a threat when there is no guarantee of ongoing sustenance – whatever the hunger might be. Jesus' life-style led him to a premature death, removing him from *sight* – while making possible a new way for his permanent presence with us., which carries implications for all who believe this enough to let it happen to them.

This issues from the death-less life of Abba – *As the living Father sent me, so I send you...* Death has no place in God, and through his self-giving death into this new life of his Son, our dying can now become likewise. We will die – as Jesus did – but Abba cannot die; which is why Jesus promises eternal life, when death loses its deadliness, becoming the gateway to new living.

No longer does death mean leaving life behind. Actual dying is now the access to this new way – Jesus has transformed the ultimate in disintegration – what we commonly understand death to mean – into the pinnacle of new life – *greater love than this there is not...* Love is God, and death comes nowhere near God.

The now of life is where this happens – the challenge to let-go of our own security systems – his critics respond: *This is too much, who can accept this...* to which he replies: *The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life...* The gift *needs to be received* if I would experience it myself –

it is your faith that has done this... Don't stand there looking up – look down! God is already here, has come to be with us where we are. The unseen God is visible in Jesus – present in the way he promised.

Our ordinary living cannot generate the deathless life of Abba – *it is the Spirit who gives life* – the Word became flesh to bring this to us. Jesus, in the flesh, giving himself for the life of the world makes Abba present by the way he is present. The gift he gives to all who believe him.

When Jesus first spoke about giving his flesh to eat and blood to drink – he outraged the crowds and they turned away in disgust [*even though everyone has been fed from the living body of a mother, in the womb*].

Jesus didn't stop them – they either trusted him or they didn't – what he said seemed outrageous, and many turned and walked away. He asked the disciples – *what about you, are you going too?* Peter's answer speaks of living faith – *we haven't a clue either – but if you say it...* Faith doesn't mean finding Jesus where we can see and hear him... simply recognising as he said: *I know where I come from, I know where I'm going... and I am with you always...*

Sacramental presence requires symbols – Jesus invites his friends to sit with him at table. The *Mandatum* [washing of feet] shows the very heart of the Eucharist. Peter protests, Jesus insists – *unless you let this happen...*

Unless you let Jesus kneel down and wash your feet you can't be with him! To be a disciple is first to be open to how much you are loved [*symbolism of Mandatum*] – and this is not optional; we do have a choice, as Judas' insincerity shows – but Jesus did not refuse him. Here is the key experience for entry into deathless living.

Washing feet will always be disturbing: How can real love be in anyone who openly enjoys the good things, and sees others hungry, and does nothing: *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?* – 1Jn.3.17.

Real Presence means real and honest presence, recognising and respecting the other, no matter who or what the circumstances. Jesus was really there for Judas, even though Judas had other motives for his being there. Eucharist lights-up all aspects of the world – even the darkest. There is nothing beyond the scope of love really present. *Remain in my love as I remain in Love [Abba]* ... The mystery of evil has to be faced by love, facing the possibility of an outright no, and still be really present. Evil can never get rid of love really present. It just makes the expressing of it more painful [Calvary].

Jesus offering himself as the *bread of life* will continually meet insincerity and betrayal; he is there not in spite of this, but *because of it: that you might [at last] believe me!* The Eucharist is hospitality: *whoever welcomes me welcomes Who sent me...* Love personalises, by celebrating differences, so strengthening communion.

Notice the setting for the Institution of this wonderful Sacrament – the setting is *betrayal*; one who freely receives, is there waiting to betray. Yet love always respects freedom; and it is in the gloom of such betrayals that the light shines ever more brightly.

Neither the Jews, nor even his friends could see how Jesus was being true to his mission – being true to himself: *where I am going you cannot as yet come* – once you have seen the *how* of all this, you will follow. It is a new commandment – no longer *love your neighbour as yourself* [*Mosaic Law*] our self-love can be so off target as to cause harm – what is new – *love one another as I love you*... if my service is done *my way* - God help you.

I cannot love as he loves *unless I experience his love* – *Eucharist*. We don't just go out and serve others [*a laudable thing*] – we first come and let him wash our feet – and then find ourselves able to do this for others, and so follow him as he promised - all the way home, to Abba.

God cannot be possessed, only enjoyed – relax and enjoy having your feet washed so much that you want others to have the same experience. Would it not have been helpful for the Church to have the same daily reverence for washing feet as it does for bringing bread and wine?

He did say *this is what it is all about*. The Incarnation is God giving the Son to become the flesh and blood reality – God became man to wash our feet; something we can all do, once we let it happen to us; the gift of real presence invites the gift of receiving.