

THE EUCHARIST

BANQUET OF LOVE

I am the living bread that came down from heaven... This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world... Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life... For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. (John 6: 51-57)

The heavens burst open quietly and the Son of God comes to us: eternity strolling in time, everlasting light with a human spirit, human innards, human bones, human face and human skin getting burned by the earth's sun on the dusty little road of Palestine. God is made human flesh, and with a wholly human voice the single Word spoken by God cries out, "My flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink."

How can we help but say, "What is he talking about? Are we cannibals? His flesh?" God seems either too far or too near. He lives above the galaxies but he comes and speaks these baffling words that rouse our half-buried longing to somehow see ourselves—some day our whole selves—absolutely alive. Job sat in the dung and insisted that his own wept-out eyes would one day see the living God and be satisfied.

God's words break our hearts with longing. Can any of us believe anything, finally, that is not in the flesh? Our flesh is inescapable. It is as unalterably here as the earth, and it is never right—too much or too little, too insensitive or too painful, not beautiful enough for anyone to cherish, or maybe even so lovely that others devour us. It is here. Our flesh is us. Could we ever possibly have a God who would not touch us in our flesh?

Jesus multiplies the loaves and fishes, heals the wreckage of our dying bodies, and then he looks us right in the face, and his voice pierces to the center of our hearts' flesh as he says, "My flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink." When the Master speaks these words of prodigal love to us, he is asking us to open our flesh and our spirit to the food that will truly fill us. Eternal life, the limitless outpouring that is Father, Son, and Spirit—endlessly embracing, saturating, overflowing the bottomlessness of my tiny human flesh.



In August we celebrate our Lady's going home, her Assumption. We fill our rooms with songs and all the flowers of summer because Mary is entering the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city; because this woman, this female body and human being has been taken absolutely home to God. Even if our minds can scarcely grasp it, our hearts understand. The flesh of our mother, the very roots of our recreated earth, is now so glorified by the Holy Spirit that two

bodies, one male and one female, from this tiny planet hidden in the vastness of space are caught up—his by the total union with the Word, hers by total union with the Word's grace—into the very center of the Holy Trinity. Now through Christ's risen presence filling all creation, Mary too is present everywhere.

Our whole human flesh, male and female—this fragility, this pain, this joy, this burden, this ecstasy, this beauty, this sorrow, this baptized dust that is the image of infinity—is living forever, the sacrament of life for every creature in the universe.

The Master is offering us his solidity—not his "spirit" only, or his mind, or his soul, but his irrefutably

THE EUCCHARIST

BANQUET OF LOVE

Pass It On! #24



Please feel free to make copies
and pass them on!

Additional issues of Pass It On
can be found on the Internet at:
www.madonnahouse.org/publications



MADONNA HOUSE PUBLICATIONS
COMBERMERE • ONTARIO • CANADA • K0J 1L0

Penny a copy — 1¢

Pass It On!

#24

human density: his flesh and his blood. He is saying, “If you live my life, if you keep my word, if you only ask me, you will have me. Not an idea of me or a feeling of me or a phantom of me or a dream of me, but me.”

“You will eat me, drink me. I will be your food. I will pass through all your organs, through your bones. I will flow in your blood, move through your arms and legs, fill your brain. My flesh will fill even the unfillable recesses of your spirit, and every cell of you will become a cell of me. I will speak my name in your heart.”

The Blessed Spirit of God—so transcendent that we cannot have even one idea about him that is literally so—has filled our ordinary, blissful or bored, death-aimed life with the glory of the risen flesh of Jesus. If we have eyes to see, we see him in every face we meet, including our own; or ears to hear, we hear him in both tears and laughter; or mouth to taste, we taste him in every bite of food we eat and every bit of earth we kiss.

“Anyone who eats this bread will live forever.” Already, because our flesh and the Master’s are one, we are in eternal life. Our ragged bodies, vessels of hope and anguish, ash heaps and icons, crazy with loss and speechless with love, already are transformed so that when we touch one another, we touch—our Lord and our God! We only need to keep coming to the table, day after day after day until the end, when we will see with our own eyes Jesus’s flesh in our own.

If we keep coming, then even before our eyes are clear enough to see the full glory of our own flesh, we will find that the Master has laid his table for us by every tree, in the middle of every moment, in the silent core of every heart. Jesus has spread out his banquet of love in my brother’s flesh, in my sister’s, in my own. “Come,” he says. So I will eat and drink, and I will live forever.

From *Circling the Sun: Meditations on Christ in Liturgy and Time* by Robert D. Pelton, priest of Madonna House