

# B read

## *The Scripture:*

Give us today our daily bread (Matthew 6:11).

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35).

## *The thought:*

Bread is an important concept within the Christian faith. Three pictures of this bread can be noted.

1. After the people of God, the Israelites, had been brought out of Egypt by Moses (see Exodus 12 – 14), they wandered in the desert for forty years. This wandering was due to their disobedience and unwillingness to follow God's plan. It was a result of their lack of faith and trust in the God who had lead them across the Red Sea. At one point they cried out to the Lord for food and he with kindness and patience sent them bread and meat in response to their grumbling. This bread which came down from heaven (Exodus 16) and appeared on the ground as thin flakes became a symbol of God's provision for his people.

2. In a similar way, Jesus provided miraculously for hungry people who had followed him all day and were without food. He took two loaves of bread and five fish and multiplied them into sufficient sustenance for thousands of needy people. Jesus used this miracle and the disciples' questions about it to explain about the true bread from heaven which God gives (see John 6).

Jesus, the bread of life, provides true sustenance for all human hungers. Only in and through him can people be redeemed and only in and through him can life's deepest needs be met.

3. And finally, Jesus institutes bread as a spiritual concept in the Last Supper (see Matthew 26). In the sacred words, "This is my body," Jesus starts a ritual which has been a beautiful celebratory sacrament and means of grace throughout the years of Christian experience. Jesus gives his body, his very life, as a sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world. His broken body becomes the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world. Christians who truly participate in the Lord's Supper find it the symbol and the

reality of God's grace and blessing. This ritual is repeated millions of times around the world every week as a sign of the communion enjoyed by Jesus and his disciples.

***The song:***

*Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,  
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;  
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;  
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!*

*Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,  
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;  
Give me to eat and live with Thee above;  
Teach me to love Thy truth, for Thou art love.*

*--Mary A. Lathbury (1877)*

***The question:***

Does bread provide a picture of my spiritual life? How is Jesus my living bread?

***The experience:***

As a child in South Africa I can remember coming home from school, making a tomato sandwich, and then sitting on the veranda and enjoying the special flavor. Similarly I also enjoyed bread with tomato jam or the real delicacy which was bread with rhubarb/raisin jam. It was a great joy to have that moment of quiet relaxation, to enjoy the sunshine, and to watch the chickens scratching in the yard.

Mother made bread regularly in those growing up years. Father called it the "staff of life." We were taught early to slice bread properly. I can still remember visiting another home and being surprised by the fact that a child my own age could not cut straight slices of bread. I think I must have viewed him as quite disadvantaged! Bread was a staple and also, as toast, was an essential part of our diet. We had lots of things on toast—even "bubble and squeak" (fried leftovers) and Welsh Rarebit (melted cheese).

In recent years, I have been moved to tears by listening to the "Panis Angelicus." The Latin words are "Panis angelicus, fit panis hominum," which could be translated as "The bread of heaven is made (or becomes) the bread of man." What a beautiful picture of the incarnation is ours as we participate in the communion sacrament of receiving the bread. The incarnate Christ offers himself, and, in doing so, gives his life for us. The communion sacrament gives opportunity to reaffirm the presence of Christ himself in our hearts and lives.