

## BREAD FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

We continue our reading of Chapter 6 of John's Gospel and once again the background is the Exodus story when God sent Manna from heaven to feed the people of Israel in the wilderness.

Now the *Bread of Life* discourse moves us to another level. Earlier Jesus had said "I am the Bread of Life" and now as he expands his statement, the language used is striking "the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

We immediately think of the Last Supper and receiving the Body of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist. However, the teaching that is unfolding in John's Gospel is broader.

Brendan Byrne SJ in his book on John's Gospel, *Life Abounding*, comments (p122): "The main thought now introduced is that the *Bread come down from heaven*, that is, the Son of God Incarnate, is also the One who gave up his human life to death in order to give life to the world."

In the Last Supper scene in John's Gospel, Jesus does not say the words "This is my Body" and "This is my Blood" that we hear in the other Gospels. That is not because John's Gospel doubts that Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist.

What is being presented in John's Gospel is the answer to the question: Why did Jesus die on the Cross? In John's Gospel the Cross is the moment of glorification, the moment when Jesus completes the task entrusted to him by his self-giving to the Father.

By receiving the Body of Christ in Communion we are becoming one with Him in his giving of himself for the life of the world by his death on the Cross.

Therefore, to share in the Eucharist is to commit ourselves to seeking to find the Father's will for us in every aspect of our life. In other words, being one with Christ does not stop when we walk out of the church after Mass.

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