

# LOAF

The power of bread.

In John 6:60, the disciples say, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” Jesus has just spoken what I consider the most difficult and incomprehensible teaching of His ministry: (John 6:56-58) “*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and me in Him...this is the bread that came down from heaven.*” A few verses back, John 6:1-15, Jesus *feeds the 5,000* with five loaves and two fish—one of His most memorable miracles. Jesus also has spoken, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and who believes in me will never thirst.” (John 6:35) And, at *the Last Supper*, Jesus offers up bread and wine as His body and blood for the sins of the world...What was Jesus talking about in all His words of Himself being bread?

Was it a symbol of the main sustenance of His day—bread—and that He was the One to supply nourishment to the soul? Not being a theologian, I do not want to delve into the depths of deep waters pertaining to “flesh and blood”—I am not a scholar on the Eucharist. But I DO have an idea of what He “meant.”

Years ago, I came up with this little acronym: **LOAF**: Love One Another & Forgive. To me, THIS seems to be a main theme of what Jesus kept preaching about. In John 13:34, Jesus says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” This Bread of Life, Jesus, the sustenance of the soul, calls on us to LOVE. And for a “definition” of what it is to Love, refer to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, where St. Paul describes Love...“Love is patient, love is kind, love is not jealous...” This is my favorite depiction of what Love is meant to be.

Jesus also says, His body is true food and His blood is true drink. My understanding is that Jesus was talking about the spiritual food and drink we get from His Word, and His life. If we heed His Word, and come to Love it—honor it—we will rarely be hungry for spiritual inspiration because the Word of God speaks to each of us in unique and special ways, when we “listen” to it and really “hear” it.

Another great theme of Jesus’ teachings is to forgive one another, (and ourselves), for offenses that could possibly drive us away from others—and from God.

**Forgiveness** is what Christ’s Passion and death was all about! Salvation is the gift Jesus gives us, in His dying on the cross and rising once again.

“Eucharist” means “*thanksgiving*,” and what do we do at Thanksgiving? EAT—the turkey and dressing, the cranberry sauce...all the trappings of the Thanksgiving meal bring us back to BREAD, Jesus, the Bread of Life who supplies all of our physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

In John 20:19-23, “Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you...as the Father has sent Me, so I send you.’” Then He breathed on them and said, “*Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.*”(my emphasis). This smacks of Jesus giving US the responsibility to bring forgiveness to this world, by forgiving and letting go of the deep resentments we may have against others...it’s as if Jesus is saying, “Hey, if YOU do not forgive, it will not be forgiven!”

What an awesome responsibility and gift this “RETAINED”-proclamation is. We MUST forgive, or the forgiveness will not be received? Yes, that’s what I believe Jesus is saying here.

So, the LOAF has many deep and meaningful things to reflect upon, as we pray, “...give us, this day, our daily bread....”

by Rich Melcher