

❖ Other Voices ❖

Eating with the fullest pleasure—pleasure, that is, that does not depend on ignorance—is perhaps the profoundest enactment of our connection with the world. In this pleasure we experience and celebrate our dependence and our gratitude, for we are living from mystery, from creatures we did not make and powers we cannot comprehend.

W E N D E L L B E R R Y, “The Pleasures of Eating,” in *What Are People For?*

The first step toward authentic social justice begins with personal conversion—a continual growth in knowledge, love and service of Christ. We must become less self-absorbed and our lives lived more in communion with the poor. Personal conversion and the common good go hand in hand. Injustice is rooted in sin.

G E R A R D S T R A U B, *When Did I See You Hungry?*

Rabbi Mendel wanted to know what heaven and hell looked like, and the prophet Elijah took him to show him. Elijah led him into a large room where a big fire was burning and where there was a large table with a huge pot of spoons that were longer than their arms, and because the people could not eat with these spoons, they sat around the table and starved. Rabbi Mendel found this room and what he saw there so terrible that he quickly ran outside.... Then Elijah took Rabbi Mendel to heaven and into another large room where a big fire was burning and where there was a large table with a big pot of steaming soup on it. And around the table sat people with the same spoons, but they did not have to starve because they were feeding each other.

D O R O T H E E S O E L L E, *The Strength of the Weak: Toward a Christian Feminist Identity*

At the end of our lives, we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made or how many great things we have done. We will be judged by “I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in.”

Hungry not only for food—but hungry for love. Naked not only for clothing—but naked for human dignity and respect.

Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks—but homeless because of rejection.

This is Christ in distressing disguise.

M O T H E R T H E R E S A (1910-1997), in Andrew Harvey, ed., *The Essential Mystics*

It is God's table around which we gather, whether it is a food table, a board table, a desk, or an altar. It is the love of God for all of God's creation that binds us together. That is the shared food of the table. As Douglas Meeks writes, "Those who live from the table of God's household are no longer simply advocates of those who struggle to live without what is necessary for life; [we] have become brothers and sisters." It is not simply that we care. We are actually kin. We are bound in a deeper relation than that created by ideology, affection, utility, our own engineering, or the happenstance of birth or life circumstance. Solidarity is about more than shared beliefs, feelings, or strategic interests. It is about the radical hospitality of the banquet, the extravagantly inclusive invitation to the table and the relationships born at the table.

CATHY C. CAMPBELL, *Stations of the Banquet: Faith Foundations for Food Justice*

Road to Emmaus

There have been crucifixions, too,
in our town—innocents
gunned down in their doorways
or in school halls; or radiation's
black outlines, three crosses
marked a sister's chest: no wonder
we walk in quiet rage, musing

And who, on this road, will join us,
seeming unaware
of the worst news in the neighborhood,
but spelling out the history of the prophets
and a future:

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things
and to enter into his glory?
Could our hearts still burn within us?

Will we ask the stranger to stay?
Break bread? And how
will our well-hammered and nailed
kitchens and bedrooms appear to us
when we understand who he is
just as he steals away?

SANDRA R. DUGUID, *in AMERICA 188:15 (April 27, 2003)*

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Do you want to honor Christ? Then do not scorn him in his nakedness, nor honor him here in the church with silken garments while neglecting him outside where he is cold and naked.... Of what use is it to weigh down Christ's table with golden cups, when he himself is dying of hunger?

First, fill him when he is hungry; then use the means you have left to adorn his table. Will you have a golden cup made but not give a cup of water? What is the use of providing the table with cloths woven of gold thread, and not providing Christ himself with the clothes he needs?

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (c. 347-407), *Homilies on Matthew, Homily 50*

The hungry man needs bread and the homeless man needs a roof; the dispossessed need justice and the lonely need fellowship; the undisciplined need order and the slave needs freedom. To allow the hungry man to remain hungry would be blasphemy against God and one's neighbour. It is for the love of Christ, which belongs as much to the hungry man as to myself, that I share my bread with him and that I share my dwelling with the homeless. If the hungry man does not attain to faith, then the guilt falls on those who refused him bread. To provide the hungry man with bread is to prepare the way for the coming of grace.

But what is happening here is a thing before the last. To give bread to the hungry man is not the same as to proclaim the grace of God and justification to him, and to have received bread is not the same as to have faith. Yet for him who does these things for the sake of the ultimate, and in the knowledge of the ultimate, this penultimate does bear a relation to the ultimate. It is the *penultimate*. The coming of grace is the ultimate.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER (1906-1945), *Ethics*

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
 But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
 Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lack'd anything.
 'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here:'
 Love said, 'You shall be he.'
 'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on Thee.'
 Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 'Who made the eyes but I?'
 'Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.'
 'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'
 'My dear, then I will serve.'
 'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'
 So I did sit and eat.

GEORGE HERBERT (1593-1632)