

The Story of Bread

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The Background

This topic has taken an extended prehistory. Many attempts were made but they always turned up to be unsatisfactory. We were unable to achieve the necessary essentiality and the presentation was jerky and complicated. Finally, the format developed in the presentation of last December-the last time we did it. It seems to have achieved the linear, yet rich qualities we were seeking. At least this format is better than what we have obtained up to now.

The essential point is the Eucharist as the Sacrament of the Covenant. The Covenant we celebrate in the Eucharist has cosmic dimensions. Heaven and earth are co-involved. In this presentation, the focus is on the presence in the Mass of the earthly elements from the sap of the earth to the work of humankind, as well as on the obvious love of God, expressed in the gift Jesus offers of himself.

Most of the children were about 9-12 years old, a few were 8 years old. We gathered around a circular table on which a tablecloth and a loaf of bread were arranged. I think that the figure of the Good Shepherd was there as well. It was the same table which, in previous meetings, was used for the presentation of the mystery of faith. Therefore, this recalling of the Mass was very explicit...

I told the story contained in the booklet I am sending you (*see next page*). It brings back many memories of my holidays at Gianna's house in the country. The children listened very attentively. The atmosphere was one of absorbed listening. Their involvement was rather noiseless, quiet yet conducive to meditation. Perhaps the aim of this presentation is too ambitious, as if we were to begin the celebration at the point of convergency of the universe. I believe that this is the meaning of the "Sacrament of the Covenant."

What is a celebration? It seems to me that it is an action upon which time and space are concentrated. There is the previous history made concrete by the liturgy, that is realized by liturgy. Read again the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer. It begins with a mention of the creation and then enumerates some essential points of the history of salvation. These are not mentioned (in the prayer) as an expression of a beautiful poem; instead, we live them again in their totality in the celebration.

Within this little piece of bread, there is then the whole universe from the deepest layers of the earth to the presence of God. We cannot imagine anything more cosmic or more omnicomprehensive. We agree, the aim is ambitious, but it is a mistake to state it as too ambitious. We are aware that when dealing with essential realities-as in this case undoubtedly, it is our obligation to transmit them to the children because children are gratified by essentials. We are not saying that we are able to do so with this presentation. This is why I am sending you the material so that you also can try and then let me know about the reactions you receive. Good Work!

-*Sofia*

The Story

If we want to know the story of the bread which is in front of us, we must go down deeply into the earth where once there was placed a seed. It was in the autumn - and a worker walked through the fields that were stripped barren, bare, and unadorned. They were waiting only. The worker scattered the seed and the seed made its way into the earth. It too seemed to be scanty and meager, so much that it died. But since that moment in the earth's womb, there began slowly a work of pulling back to the seed all the juices that crisscross the deep veins of the earth. The rain was called towards the seed, as well as the sun with its heat, and caused the seed to grow.

The work of the earth, rain, and sun is very slow and mysteriously lasts the whole winter. Only in springtime, the field which was bare, and barren earlier is transformed into a green carpet. But the seed has not yet ripened. Summer must come so that the seed is ripened. Then the field changes color: it is gold all over - the seed has become a stalk of wheat with many ears of grain. This is the result of the work by the earth, the sun, the rain, and the air. This activity is carried out with no human intervention.

At this stage, men and women return to work the field. The ears of wheat are gathered; the grains of the ears are separated from the chaff. Then they are ground into flour. Huge combines help the human beings throughout this working process, to harvest, thresh, and mill the grain. When the flour is ready, it is sent out to other environments and to other hands. Other elements are called to contribute to the transformation of the wheat seed, water, yeast, and fire. Thus, it becomes bread. Baked in the heat of the oven, the bread is ready to be brought to our table. Women, men, and children gather around the table. The bread is broken to satisfy their hunger and make their meal more pleasant. The bread of our tables is a gift we receive from God; it is the fruit of the earth and the work of many people. At this stage, both the earth and humankind have fulfilled their task. The hands of the human being have taken the seed to the highest level of efficiency. Yet, at this moment, the process comes to a halt. It cannot go any farther.

Human beings cannot go any farther, but God can. Indeed, there is a gesture that the human being can perform so that the seed reaches its highest level. This time it is a gesture of prayer. We can ask God to transform the bread into a sign of the presence of the Risen Christ, with these words: "Send your Spirit to transform this bread and this wine so that they become for us the Body and the Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ." We obey the will of Jesus Christ when we ask God for this gift. Jesus, our Lord, who once said over the bread: "This is my Body." The bread has become the Bread. These elements converge in the Bread: the sap of the earth, the action of the rain and sun, the zestful work of the human beings, and the immense love of God, so that Jesus Christ, who died and is risen, is made visible in a particular way in our world.