Spirituality
Scripture for Life



Freshly baked and cut altar bread is waiting to be sorted in the bakery at the Monastery of St. Clare in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, July 21, 2021. (OSV News/CNS/Chaz Muth)



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What are some of your favorite hymns? Why do you love them?

The second question is harder to answer. It may be the music, the lyrics, the experience of singing together and of harmony, or perhaps what they have meant to you in important moments of your life. It's been said that when St. Thomas Aquinas finished writing his theology of the Eucharist, he felt that his best efforts were nothing but the dimmest of reflections on the unfathomable mystery of Christ's presence in sacrament. Some say that in the end, the great theologian realized that the best he could do was sing a hymn: "Adoro Te Devote."

If you listen to that hymn and understand the Latin words, you recognize it as romantic prayer: Aquinas adoring and rededicating his life to God, hidden and present. It reveals his overwhelming and grateful sense of the presence of the One who desires union with humanity:

> To thee doth my whole heart subject itself, because, in contemplating thee, everything [else] is found lacking. ... Grant to me always to live from thee. ... Jesus, whom now I behold under a veil, I pray that that for which I so thirst may come to pass: that looking intently upon thy unveiled face, I may be blessed by the sight of your glory.

Learning from Aquinas, we might think of today's celebration as "The Solemnity of the Great Love of God." In our first reading, Moses reminded his people of how God had led them in love through the desert and fed them with manna from heaven. Moses ended his discourse with the reminder that, if they hope to flourish, human beings need to feast on both manna and the Word of God.

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

June 7, 2026

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a
Psalm 147
1 Corinthians 10:16-17

John 6:51-58

Today's Gospel portrays Jesus responding to people who wanted to make him king because he provided them with all the bread they could eat. In typical style, John shows us Jesus the mystic in the company of people so earthbound that metaphors are as obscure to them as is the color of the night air.

Remember Nicodemus, who heard Jesus talk about being born again and understood it as crawling back into his mother's womb? Then there was the woman at the well who asked for the kind of water that would quench her thirst once and forever. John likes to depict Jesus drawing people beyond the literal into profound meaning.

At this stage of his ministry, Jesus couldn't have been talking about people literally eating his flesh. He was talking like he did to Nicodemus and to Photina at the well, using metaphors to draw them into the realm of the Spirit.

To explain more deeply, Jesus later compares the experience of the person who "feeds on me" or "eats my flesh" to his experience of his life in the Father. Throughout John's Gospel we hear that all that Jesus is and does comes from the Father. Now, he says that he offers his life, himself, as a gift to the world to nourish us as the Father nourishes, inspires and accompanies him. That is what he wants to be for and with us.

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Paul builds on this in his letter to the Corinthians. In the two verses of today's reading, Paul reminds the community that everyone who participates in the supper of the Lord becomes part of Christ and of one another. For Paul, the greatest miracle of blessing the cup and breaking the bread is that it deepens our identity as one with and in Christ.

We've been taught to think of the Eucharist as a miracle that astounds and shows us the great love of God in consecrated bread and wine. That is true to the Catechism and leads to deep gratitude. But in calling himself the bread of life, Jesus offers much more than that.

Jesus' intent in calling himself the bread of life is to draw us into such profound union and identity in him that it can only be compared to his relationship with the Father. He wants us to receive, to experience the great love of God through him and be changed by it — over and again.

This solemnity invites us to ask ourselves who we are and who we are becoming. How does our participation in the Eucharist lead us individually and communally into deeper identity in Christ? Take five minutes to listen to and be moved by a hymn as profound as "Adoro Te Devote"; such music affects us like a sacrament, effecting in us what the words themselves say, it influences our very identity.

Moving into this mystery, we, similar to Aquinas, can come to understand that words are useless. All we can do is adore.