

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 13: Bread from Heaven

What We Found

The bronze serpent returned with a precision Numbers never states: he who turned toward it was saved, not by what he saw, but by you, the Savior of all (16:7), sacred signs point us to God, but they do not save on their own, and Jesus claimed the scene for the cross: as Moses lifted up the serpent, so must the Son of man be lifted up (John 3:14). Then the manna, slowly: the food of angels, bread from heaven suited to every taste, ministering to the desire of the one who took it, the phrase the Church still sings as *panis angelicus*. Its curriculum was dependence: not the production of crops, but your word preserves those who trust in you (16:26), the same lesson Deuteronomy 8:3 states and Jesus quoted in the desert. And it melted at sunrise, so every morning Israel was taught to seek God's gift first: one must rise before the sun to give you thanks (16:28), a daily lesson in thanksgiving (in Greek, *eucharistia*), long centuries before that word became the Church's name for the Mass.

Then Capernaum. The crowd brought up the manna, and Jesus pointed beyond it: your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died... I am the living bread which came down from heaven... and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh (John 6:49-51). His listeners understood him literally; many left; and he retracted nothing, asking the Twelve, do you also wish to go away? St. Paul warns that the unworthy communicant profanes the body and blood of the Lord; St. Ignatius, within one lifetime of the Last Supper, defined heretics as those who deny the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior; St. Cyril taught the newly baptized: do not regard the bread and wine as simply that. The manna in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, the true bread from heaven (CCC 1094), in which the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained (CCC 1374). If that is true, then the nearest tabernacle holds the food of angels, and the only question is whether we will come.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch • Letter to the Smyrnaeans 7.1 (c. AD 107)

His test for the docetist heretics was the Eucharist: they abstain from the Eucharist because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father raised. The Real Presence as the dividing line of orthodoxy, within one lifetime of the Last Supper.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem • Mystagogical Catechesis 4.6 (4th century)

To the newly baptized: do not regard the bread and wine as simply that, for they are, according to the Master's own declaration, the body and blood of Christ; even though the senses suggest otherwise, let faith make you firm.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas • The Panis angelicus strophe of Sacris solemniis, and Lauda Sion (13th century)

Composing the liturgy for Corpus Christi, he reached for this chapter's vocabulary: panis angelicus fit panis hominum, the bread of angels becomes the bread of men. What was signified in the manna is given in truth. The Church has been singing this session's thesis for seven hundred and fifty years.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 17, 18, and 19, the final chapters, with a pencil. Mark every appearance of light, darkness, and the word.
- **Gather at dawn once.** One morning this week, rise before your screens and give the first ten minutes to thanksgiving, the manna's own discipline. A daily Mass is the full version.
- **Make one visit.** Sit near a tabernacle lamp for ten minutes this week. Bring John 6. Read verses 48 to 58 there, once, slowly, and let the location weigh in.
- **Bring everything next week.** Next session is the finale: the Exodus finished, and the question we sealed in Session 1 answered in full. Bring your stack of Take-Homes, your week-one shelf-check memory, and anyone who has asked you hard questions along the way.

Memory Verse

"Instead of these things you gave your people the food of angels, and without their toil you supplied them from heaven with bread ready to eat." (Wisdom 16:20)

Before next session: read Wisdom 17, 18, and 19, and bring your full stack of Take-Homes.

Catechism references: CCC 1094, CCC 1374.

Scripture We Opened

- Tonight's text: Wisdom 16:1-29
- The discovery: John 3:14-15 (the serpent lifted up)
- The discovery: John 6:31-58 (the Bread of Life discourse)
- Numbers 21:8-9 (the bronze serpent, read with Wisdom 16:7's precision)
- Exodus 16 (the manna narrative; the jar at 16:33)
- Psalm 78:24-25 (the bread of the angels)
- Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4 (not by bread alone)
- John 6:60-69 (the hard saying, the walkout, Peter's confession)
- 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 (profaning the body and blood)
- Hebrews 9:4 and Revelation 2:17 (the golden urn; the hidden manna)
- John 21:4, 9-12 (breakfast on the shore)
- Proverbs 9:5 (Wisdom's banquet: come, eat of my bread)