

Take-Home 5: Bread From Heaven

What We Found

We became experts in the manna. It rained from heaven with the morning dew; Israel asked *man hu*, what is it, and Moses answered: it is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat (Exodus 16:15). It could not be hoarded, except before the Sabbath; it tasted like wafers made with honey; it fell for forty years; and God commanded an omer of it kept in a jar before the LORD, throughout the generations, that they may see the bread (Exodus 16:32-34).

Moses interpreted it: man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD (Deuteronomy 8:3). And Israel's own songs exalted it: the grain of heaven, the bread of the angels (Psalm 78:24-25), the food of angels, suited to every taste (Wisdom 16:20-21). The figure kept growing in the telling, as if straining toward something it had not yet become.

Voices of the Church

St. Ambrose of Milan (d. 397)

In summary of *De Mysteriis*: the manna was a wonder, yet those who ate it died in the wilderness. What you receive at the altar is greater than manna as the reality is greater than the shadow, for it is the body of Christ; the fathers ate and died, and this bread is given for eternal life.

St. Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373)

In summary of themes in his hymns (the cycle On Unleavened Bread among them): the bread that came down for a time fed one people in one wilderness; the Bread of Life who came down from heaven gives himself to all peoples in every place. The wilderness table, we might say with him, was a promise written in dew.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

From his hymn *Sacris Solemniis*, the verse the world knows as *Panis Angelicus*: the bread of angels becomes the bread of men; the bread of heaven puts an end to the figures. O wonderful thing: the poor, the servant, the lowly eat their Lord.

Live It This Week

- Pray the Our Father slowly once a day, pausing at give us this day our daily bread, and name aloud what you need from God today only.
- Fast from one comfort for one day this week, and each time you miss it, pray Deuteronomy 8:3 from memory.
- Read Numbers 11:4-9 and notice what forty years of miracle sounded like to bored hearts. Ask God to guard you from that.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance. Psalm 78:25

Before Next Session

Read John 5:31-47, especially the last verses, where Jesus says that Moses wrote of him. Next week we return to John 6 with everything we now carry.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1094, 1334, 2837.