Boston Catholic Journal

NIHIL NISI IESUM

PART FOUR

The Servant's Song of Sorrow



You have given us "the eyes of Faith," Lord, by which to see you. How they blaze before that Immolation at the Altar by which you purchased our souls!

From the humble pews we kneel and are translated! We behold in awe what is enacted before us! In breathless anticipation we await the moment of that sublime word that comes to us in staggering simplicity, the two letters that bind Heaven and Earth, time and eternity, the human and the divine – that forever separate life and death; the final word, proclaiming the apocalyptic victory of Life over death, invincible Light over impenetrable darkness, redemption over reprobation, sanctity over sin, whence the Word, once again, becomes flesh amongst us: ***"IS"***

"This *is* My Body"

Two letters — ***is*** — through which is enacted, in our very presence, the salvation of the world, and in which is proffered the greatest sanctification of the soul. All life, all history, all things from the beginning, all things pertaining to the end of all things, culminating in absolute simplicity, in four words, in two letters: "This ***is*** My Body".

How is it that the hands that hold You do not tremble upon this utterance; that the eyes that look upon You are not utterly translated in beholding God? How is it that the tremendous silence that precedes the breaking of the Seventh Seal (Apoc. 8.1) in the very Heavens themselves: the tongues of angels and Saints made still throughout the universe of all things created... prevails in Heaven — but the tongues of men do not cease on Earth in the Breaking of the Bread?

And with what lack of awe, with what seeming absence of recognition, and in what haste so many of God's own priests themselves pronounce these words! More painful still, the perfunctory, even thoughtless way in which Your Sacred Body, Your Precious Blood is so often handled? How hastily consumed, the Bread of Angels! How quickly quaffed the Precious Blood that bled for so many hours and through how many wounds upon the Cross! Failing to truly discern Thee under so humble a guise, with what haste they consume Thee... as Thy people Israel grew weary of Manna in the desert of their affliction, hungering for things more delectable to their senses still.

How often I have seen you, Your Most Sacred Body, carelessly *scooped out* by the handful... and thoughtlessly, hastily, tossed from one vessel into another, as though quickly apportioning an insignificant food of so little substance, to impatient and indifferent guests! Perceiving so little reverence, so little awareness in your priests, is it a wonder that so few reverence the reality of your Presence when they receive You? They do not see You... any more than those unfortunate priests at whose hands You are so outrageously trivialized. Forgive me my outrage, my God...

Steeped in sin, even I, a sinner, from whom so much is hidden, kneel in stupefaction before it. How is it that I see your broken, bruised, limp, and bleeding Body lying upon the Altar? How can I see what they do not see? I am a miserable sinner in the outermost fields, hedged in on all sides with thistles as towering as my sins? From this vast, this immense and immeasurable distance, how can I see... when those

whom you anointed, and into whose hands You have given Yourself, see so indistinctly, or, for greater sorrow yet, not at all?

How can one man see the Altar as no less than the full embrace of Mary as she wrapped herself around Your dead and bloodless body when the soldiers placed You in her lap, her tears laving Your body in unfathomable sorrow? Can the eyes of a sinner behold his Redeemer, when the congregation of the sinless see nothing? As the One, True Light is extinguished before our eyes, we sing a paean to *ourselves* as "the light of the world"...

Why do You break my heart... even if it is the heart of one who has broken faith with You through sin?

Is mine an illusion? Perhaps a hidden but consciously cultivated garden of pride? Am I simply quick to seize and "secretly savor" what I deem to be a "privilege" accorded to me and few others, the privilege of being "given to see"... what so many others apparently fail to see?

And is this awareness no more than the trap of pride in the guise of simplicity?

O Domine, adiuva me ... "ab occultis meis munda me;" obsecro Te!

But you know me, and there is nothing hidden from Thee, nor do I desire to hide anything from Thee even if I could, for I love You!

Do with me as You will.

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