

With Burning Hearts, “Take and eat”

(With Burning Hearts, Henri Nouwen, Orbis Books, 1994, pp. 65–68)

Opening Song: “Let Us Break Bread Together” (*Breaking Bread* #372 (373))

- Voice 1:** When Jesus enters into the home of His disciples, it becomes His home. The guest becomes host.
- Voice 2:** He who was invited now invites. The two disciples who trusted the stranger enough to let Him enter into their inner space are now led into the inner life of their host.
- Voice 3:** “Now while He was with them at table, He took the bread and said the blessing; then He broke it and handed it to them.”
- Voice 4:** So simple, so ordinary, so obvious and still – so very different! What else can you do when you share bread with your friends?
- Voice 5:** You take it, bless it, break it and give it. That is what bread is for: to be taken, blessed, broken and given.
- Voice 6:** Nothing new, nothing surprising. It happens every day, in countless homes. It belongs to the essence of living.
- Voice 7:** We can’t really live without bread that is taken, blessed, broken and given. Without it there is no table fellowship, no community, no bond of friendship, no peace, no love, no hope.
- Voice 8:** Yet, with it, all can become new! Maybe we have forgotten that the Eucharist is a simple human gesture.
- Voice 9:** The vestments, the candles, the altar servers, the large books, the outstretched arms, the large altar, the songs, the people – nothing seems very simple, very ordinary, very obvious.
- Voice 10:** We often need a booklet to follow the ceremony and understand its meaning. Still, nothing is meant to be different from what happened in that little village among three friends.
- Voice 11:** There is bread on the table; there is wine on the table. The bread is taken, blessed, broken and given.
- Voice 12:** The wine is taken, blessed and given. That is what happens around each table that wants to be a table of peace.
- Voice 13:** Every time we invite Jesus into our homes, that is to say, into our lives with all their light and dark sides, and offer Him the place of honour at our tables, He takes the bread and the cup and hands them to us saying: “Take and eat, this is My body. Take and drink, this is My blood. Do this to remember Me.”

- Voice 14:** Are we surprised? Not really! Wasn't our heart burning when He talked to us on the road?
- Voice 15:** Didn't we already know that He was not a stranger to us? Weren't we already aware that the one who was crucified by our leaders was alive and with us?
- Voice 16:** Hadn't we seen it before, that He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to us? He did so before the large crowd who had listened for long hours to His word, He did it in the upper room before Judas handed Him over to suffering, and He has done it countless times when we have come to the end of a long day and He joins us around the table for a simple meal.
- Voice 17:** The Eucharist is the most ordinary and the most divine gesture imaginable. That is the truth of Jesus,
- Voice 18:** So human, yet so divine; so familiar, yet so mysterious; so close, yet so revealing!
- Voice 19:** But that is the story of Jesus who "being in the form of God did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, He was humbler yet, even accepting death, death on a cross" (Philippians 2:18)
- Voice 20:** It is the story of God who wants to come close to us, so close that we can see Him with our own eyes, hear Him with our own ears, touch Him with our own hands; so close that there is nothing between us and Him, nothing that separates, nothing that divides, nothing that creates distance.
- Voice 21:** Jesus is God-for-us, God-with-us, God-within-us. Jesus is God giving Himself completely, pouring Himself out for us without reserve.
- Voice 22:** Jesus doesn't hold back or cling to His own possessions. He gives all there is to give.
- Voice 23:** "Eat, drink, this is My body, this is My blood...this is Me for you!"
- Voice 24:** We all know of this desire to give ourselves at the table. We say: "Eat and drink; I made this for you. Take more; it is there for you to enjoy, to be strengthened, yes, to feel how much I love you."
- Voice 25:** What we desire is not simply to give food, but to give ourselves. "Be my guest," we say.
- Voice 26:** We encourage our friends to eat from our table, we want to say, "Be my friend, be my companion, be my love – be part of my life – I want to give myself to you."
- Voice 27:** In the Eucharist, Jesus gives all. The bread is not simply a sign of His desire to become our food; the cup is not just a sign of His willingness to be our drink.

- Voice 28:** Bread and wine *become* His body and blood in the giving. The bread, indeed, is His body given for us; the wine, His blood poured out for us.
- Voice 29:** As God becomes fully present for us in Jesus, so Jesus becomes fully present to us in the bread and the wine of the Eucharist. God not only became flesh for us years ago in the country far away.
- Voice 30:** God also becomes food and drink for us now at this moment of the Eucharistic celebration, right where we are together around the table.
- Voice 31:** God does not hold back; God gives all. That is the mystery of the Incarnation.
- Voice 32:** That too is the mystery of the Eucharist. Incarnation and Eucharist are two expressions of the immense, self-giving love of God.
- Voice 33:** And so the sacrifice on the cross and the sacrifice at the table are one sacrifice, one complete, divine self-giving that reaches out to all humanity in time and space.

Closing song:

All sing: Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen!