

## John: 6:27–46

### From Catena Aurea:

27. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

28. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

31. Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32. Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) But they said this, not that they might learn, and do them, but to obtain from Him another exhibition of His bounty.

**THEOPHYLACT.** Christ, though He saw it would not avail, yet for the good of others afterwards, answered their question; and shewed them, or rather the whole world, what was the work of God: Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. in Joan) He does not say, That ye believe Him, but, that ye believe on Him. For the devils believed Him, and did not believe on Him; and we believe Paul, but do not believe on Paul. To believe on Him is believing to love, believing to honour Him, believing to go unto Him, and be made members incorporate of His Body. The faith, which God requires of us, is that which worketh by love. Faith indeed is distinguished from works by the Apostle, who says, That man is justified by faith without the

deeds of the law. (Rom. 3:28) But the works indeed which appear good, without faith in Christ, are not really so, not being referred to that end, which makes them good. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4). And therefore our Lord would not separate faith from works, but said that faith itself was the doing the work of God; He saith not, This is your work, but, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him: in order that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord.

**AUGUSTINE.** (xxv. 12) To eat then that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, is to believe on Him. Why dost thou make ready thy tooth and thy belly? Only believe, and thou hast eaten already. As He called on them to believe, they still asked for miracles whereby to believe; They said therefore unto Him, What sign shewest Thou then, that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work?

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) Nothing can be more unreasonable than their asking for another miracle, as if none had been given already. And they do not even leave the choice of the miracle to our Lord; but would oblige Him to give them just that sign, which was given to their fathers: Our fathers did eat manna in the desert.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) Whereas many miracles were performed in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the desert, they remembered this one the best of any. Such is the force of appetite. They do not mention this miracle as the work either of God, or of Moses, in order to avoid raising Him on the one hand to an equality with God, or lowering Him on the other by a comparison with Moses; but they take a middle ground, only saying, Our fathers did eat manna in the desert.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. s. 12) Or thus; Our Lord sets Himself above Moses, who did not dare to say that He gave the meat which perisheth not. The multitude therefore remembering what Moses had done, and wishing for some greater miracle, say, as it were, Thou promisest the meat which perisheth not, and doest not works equal to those Moses did. He gave us not barley loaves, but manna from heaven.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xxv. 1) Our Lord might have replied, that He had done miracles greater than Moses: but it was not the time for such a declaration. One thing He desired, viz. to bring them to taste the spiritual meat: then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. Did not the manna come from heaven? True, but in what sense did it? The same in which the birds are called, the birds of heaven; and just as it is said in the Psalm, The Lord thundered out of heaven. (Ps. 17) He calls it the true bread, not because the miracle of the manna was false, but because it was the figure, not the reality. He does not say too, Moses gave it you not, but I: but He puts God for Moses, Himself for the manna.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 13.) As if He said, That manna was the type of this food, of which I just now spoke; and which all my miracles refer to. You like my miracles, you despise what is signified by them. This bread which God gives, and which this manna represented, is the Lord Jesus Christ, as we read next, For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

**THEOPHYLACT.** He calls Himself the true bread, because the only-begotten Son of God, made man, was principally signified by the manna. For manna means literally, what is this? The Israelites were astonished at first on finding it, and asked one another what it was. And the Son of God, made man, is in an especial sense this mysterious manna, which we ask about, saying, What is this? How can the Son of God be the Son of man? How can one person consist of two natures?

**THEOPHYLACT.** But this bread, being essentially life, (for He is the Son of the living Father,) in quickening all things, does but what is natural to Him to do. For as natural bread supports our weak flesh, so Christ, by the operations of the Spirit, gives life to the soul; and even incorruption to the body, (for at the resurrection the body will be made incorruptible.) Wherefore He says, that He giveth life unto the world.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) Not only to the Jews, but to the whole world. The multitude, however, still attached a low meaning to His words: Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. They say, Give us this bread, not, Ask Thy Father to give it us: whereas He had said that His Father gave this bread.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 13) As the woman of Samaria, when our Lord told her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall never thirst, thought He meant natural water, and said, Sir, give me this water, that she might never be in want of it again: in the same way these say, Give us this bread, which refreshes, supports, and fails not.

6:35–40

35. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

36. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 2) Our Lord now proceeds to set forth mysteries; and first speaks of His Divinity: And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. He does not say this of His body, for He speaks of that at the end; The bread that I will give you is My flesh. Here He is speaking of His Divinity. The flesh is bread, by virtue of the Word; this bread is heavenly bread, on account of the Spirit which dwelleth in it.

**THEOPHYLACT.** He does not say, I am the bread of nourishment, but of life, for, whereas all things brought death, Christ hath quickened us by Himself. But the life here, is not our common life, but that which is not cut short by death: He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and He that believeth on Me shall never thirst.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 14) He that cometh to Me, i. e. that believeth on Me, shall never hunger, has the same meaning as shall never thirst; both signifying that eternal society, where there is no want.

**THEOPHYLACT.** Or, shall never hunger or thirst, i. e. shall never be wearied<sup>1</sup> of hearing the word of God, and shall never thirst as to the understanding: as though He had not the water of baptism, and the sanctification of the Spirit.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 14) Ye desire bread from heaven: but, though you have it before you, you eat it not. This is what I told you: But I said unto you, that ye also have seen Me, and believe not.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 2. c. 5.) Or, I said to you, refers to the testimony of the Scriptures, of which He said above, They are they which testify of Me; and again, I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not. That ye have seen Me, is a silent allusion to His miracles.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 14) But, because ye have seen Me, and believed not, I have not therefore lost the people of God: All that the Father giveth Me, shall come unto Me; and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 14) That inner place, whence there is no casting out, is a great sanctuary, a secret chamber, where is neither weariness, or the bitterness of evil thoughts, or the cross of pain and temptation: of which it is said, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. (Mat. 25)

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xliv. 2) The expression, that the Father giveth Me, shews that it is no accident whether a man believes or not, and that belief is not the work of human cogitation, but requires a revelation from on high, and a mind devout enough to receive the revelation. Not that they are free from blame, whom the Father does not give, for they are deficient even in that which lies in their own power, the will to believe. This is a virtual rebuke to their unbelief, as it shews that whoever does not believe in Him, transgresses the Father's will. Paul, however, says, that He gives them up to the Father: When He shall have given up the kingdom to God, even the Father. (1 Cor. 15:24) But as the Father, in giving, does not take from Himself, so neither does the Son when He gives up. The Son is said to give up to the Father, because we are brought to the Father by Him. And of the Father at the same time we read, By Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son. (1 Cor. 1:9) Whoever then, our Lord says, cometh to Me, shall be saved, for to save such I took up flesh: For I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. But what? Has thou one will, He another? No, certainly. Mark what He says afterwards; And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have everlasting life. And this is the Son's will too; For the Son quickeneth whom He will. (c. 5:21) He says then, I came to do nothing but what the Father wills, for I have no will distinct from My Father's: all things that the Father hath are Mine. But this not now: He reserves these higher truths for the end of His ministry.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 15) This is the reason why He does not cast out those who come to Him. For I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. The soul departed from God, because it was proud. Pride casts us out, humility restores us. When a physician in the treatment of a disease, cures certain outward symptoms, but not the cause which produces them, his cure is only temporary. So long as the cause remains, the disease may return. That the cause then of all diseases, i. e. pride, might be eradicated, the Son of God humbled Himself. Why art thou proud, O man? The Son of God humbled Himself for thee. It might shame thee, perhaps, to imitate a humble man; but imitate at least a humble God. And this is the proof of His humility: I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. Pride does its own will; humility the will of God.

**HILARY.** (iii. de Trin. c. 9) Not that He does what He does not wish. He fulfils obediently His Father's will, wishing also Himself to fulfil that will.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv in Joan. 16) For this very reason therefore, I will not cast out Him that cometh to Me; because I came not to do Mine own will. I came to teach humility, by being humble Myself. He that cometh to Me, is made a member of Me, and necessarily humble, because He will not do His own will, but the will

of God; and therefore is not cast out. He was cast out, as proud; he returns to Me humble, he is not sent away, except for pride again; he who keeps his humility, falleth not from the truth. And further, that He does not cast out such, because He came not to do His will, He shews when He says, And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing. (Mat. 18:14) Every one of an humble mind is given to Him: It is not the will of your Father, that one of these little ones should perish. The swelling ones may perish; of the little ones none can; for except ye be as a little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Mat. 18:3, 5)

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Cor. et Gratia, c. ix) They therefore who by God's unerring providence are foreknown, and predestined, called, justified, glorified, even before their new birth, or before they are born at all, are already the sons of God, and cannot possibly perish; these are they who truly come to Christ. By Him there is given also perseverance in good unto the end; which is given only to those who will not perish. Those who do not persevere will perish.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xliv. 3) I should lose nothing; He lets them know, he does not desire his own honour, but their salvation. After these declarations, I will in no wise cast out, and I should lose nothing, He adds, But should raise it up at the last day. In the general resurrection the wicked will be cast out, according to Matthew, Take him, and cast him into outer darkness. (Mat. 22:13) And, Who is able to cast both soul and body into hell. (Mat. 10:28) He often brings in mention of the resurrection for this purpose: viz. to warn men not to judge of God's providence from present events, but to carry on their ideas to another world.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxv. 19) See how the twofold resurrection is expressed here. He who cometh to Me, shall forthwith rise again; by becoming humble, and a member of Me. But then He proceeds; But I will raise him up at the last day. To explain the words, All that the Father hath given Me, and, I should lose nothing, He adds; And this is the will of Him that hath sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. Above He said, Whoso heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me: (c. 5:24) now it is, Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him. He does not say, believe on the Father, because it is the same thing to believe on the Father, and on the Son; for as the Father hath life in Himself, even so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and again, That whoso seeth the Son and believeth on Him, should have everlasting life: i. e. by believing, by passing over to life, as at the first resurrection. But this is only the first resurrection, He alludes to the second when He says, And I will raise him up at the last day.

6:41–46

41. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

42. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

43. Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

45. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

46. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvi. 1) The Jews, so long as they thought to get food for their carnal eating, had no misgivings; but when this hope was taken away, then, we read, the Jews murmured at Him because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. This was only a pretence. The real cause of their complaint was that they were disappointed in their expectation of a bodily feast. As yet however they revered Him, for His miracle; and only expressed their discontent by murmurs. What these were we read next: And they said, Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven?

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 1) But they were far from being fit for that heavenly bread, and did not hunger for it. For they had not that hunger of the inner man.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvi. 1) It is evident that they did not yet know of His miraculous birth: for they call Him the Son of Joseph. Nor are they blamed for this. Our Lord does not reply, I am not the Son of Joseph: for the miracle of His birth would have overpowered them. And if the birth according to the flesh were above their belief, how much more that higher and ineffable birth.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi) He took man's flesh upon Him, but not after the manner of men; for, His Father being in heaven, He chose a mother upon earth, and was born of her without a father. The answer to the murmurers next follows: Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves; as if to say, I know why ye hunger not after this bread, and so cannot understand it, and do not seek it:

No man can come to Me except the Father who hath sent Me draw him. This is the doctrine of grace: none cometh, except he be drawn. But whom the Father draws, and whom not, and why He draws one, and not another, presume not to decide, if thou wouldest avoid falling into error. Take the doctrine as it is given thee: and, if thou art not drawn, pray that thou mayest be.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvi. 1) But here the Manichees attack us, asserting that nothing is in our own power. Our Lord's words however do not destroy our free agency, but only shew that we need Divine assistance. For He is speaking not of one who comes without the concurrence of his own will, but one who has many hindrances in the way of his coming.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 2. et sq.) Now if we are drawn to Christ without our own will, we believe without our own will; the will is not exercised, but compulsion is applied. But, though a man can enter the Church involuntarily, he cannot believe other than voluntarily; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Therefore if he who is drawn, comes without his will, he does not believe; if he does not believe, he does not come. For we do not come to Christ, by running, or walking, but by believing, not by the motion of the body, but the will of the mind. Thou art drawn by thy will. But what is it to be drawn by the will? Delight thou in the Lord, and He will give thee thy heart's desire. (Ps. 36) There is a certain craving of the heart, to which that heavenly bread is pleasant. If the Poet could say, "Trahit sua quemque voluptas," how much more strongly may we speak of a man being drawn to Christ, i. e. being delighted with truth, happiness, justice, eternal life, all which is Christ? Have the bodily senses their pleasures, and has not the soul hers? Give me one who loves, who longs, who burns, who sighs for the source of his being and his eternal home; and he will know what I mean. But why did He say, Except my Father draw him? If we are to be drawn, let us be drawn by Him to whom His love saith, Draw me, we will run after Thee. (Cant. 1:4) But let us see what is meant by it. The Father draws to the Son those who believe on the Son, as thinking that He has God for His Father. For the Father begat the Son equal to Himself; and whoso thinks and believes really and seriously that He on Whom He believes is equal to the Father, him the Father draws to the Son. Arius believed Him to be a creature; the Father drew not him. Thomas says, Christ is only a man. Because he so believes, the Father draws him not. He drew Peter who said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mat. 16); to whom accordingly it was told, For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. That revelation is the drawing. For if earthly objects, when put before us, draw us; how much more shall Christ, when revealed by the Father? For what doth the soul more long after than truth? But here men hunger, there they will be filled. Wherefore He

adds, And I will raise him up at the last day: as if He said, He shall be filled with that, for which he now thirsts, at the resurrection of the dead; for I will raise him up.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Qu. Nov. et Vet.) Or the Father draws to the Son, by the works which He did by Him.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) Great indeed is the Son's dignity; the Father draws men, and the Son raises them up. This is no division of works, but an equality of power. He then shews the way in which the Father draws. It is written in the Prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. You see the excellence of faith; that it cannot be learnt from men, or by the teaching of man, but only from God Himself. The Master sits, dispensing His truth to all, pouring out His doctrine to all. But if all are to be taught of God, how is it that some believe not? Because all here only means the generality, or, all that have the will.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Prædest. Sanctorum, c. viii) Or thus; When a schoolmaster is the only one in a town, we say loosely, This man teaches all here to read; not that all learn of him, but that he teaches all who do learn. And in the same way we say that God teaches all men to come to Christ: not that all do come, but that no one comes in any other way.

**AUGUSTINE.** (super Joan. Tr. xxv. 7) All the men of that kingdom shall be taught of God; they shall hear nothing from men: for, though in this world what they hear with the outward ear is from men, yet what they understand is given them from within; from within is light and revelation. I force certain sounds into your ears, but unless He is within to reveal their meaning, how, O ye Jews, can ye acknowledge Me, ye whom the Father hath not taught?

**GLOSS.** These words are not found in Joel, but something like them; Be glad then ye children of Sion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for He hath given you a Teacher. (Quia dedit nobis lectorem justitiæ. Vulg.) And more expressly in Isaiah, And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord. (Isa. 54:13)

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) An important distinction. All men before learnt the things of God through men; now they learn them through the Only Son of God, and the Holy Spirit.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Prædest. Sanctorum, c. viii. et seq.) All that are taught of God come to the Son, because they have heard and learnt from the Father of the Son: wherefore He proceeds, Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh to Me. But if every one that hath heard and learnt of the Father cometh, every one that hath not heard of the Father hath not learnt. For beyond the reach of the bodily senses is this school, in which the Father is heard, and men taught to come to the Son. Here we have not to do with the carnal ear, but the ear of the heart; for here is the Son Himself, the Word by which

the Father teacheth, and together with Him the Holy Spirit: the operations of the three Persons being inseparable from each other. This is attributed however principally to the Father, because from Him proceeds the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Therefore the grace which the Divine bounty imparts in secret to men's hearts, is rejected by none from hardness of heart: seeing it is given in the first instance, in order to take away hard-heartedness. Why then does He not teach all to come to Christ? Because those whom He teaches, He teaches in mercy; and those whom He teaches not, He teaches not in judgment. But if we say, that those, whom He teaches not, wish to learn, we shall be answered, Why then is it said, Wilt thou not turn again, and quicken us? (Ps. 84:6) If God does not make willing minds out of unwilling, why prayeth the Church, according to our Lord's command, for her persecutors? For no one can say, I believed, and therefore He called me: rather the preventing mercy of God called him, that he might believe.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 7. et seq.) Behold then how the Father draweth; not by laying a necessity on man, but by teaching the truth. To draw, belongeth to God: Every one that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh to Me. What then? Hath Christ taught nothing? Not so. What if men saw not the Father teaching, but saw the Son. So then the Father taught, the Son spoke. As I teach you by My word, so the Father teaches by His Word. But He Himself explains the matter, if we read on: Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father; as if He said, Do not when I tell you, Every man that hath heard and learnt of the Father, say to yourselves, We have never seen the Father, and how then can we have learnt from Him? Hear Him then in Me. I know the Father, and am from Him, just as a word is from him who speaks it; i. e. not the mere passing sound, but that which remaineth with the speaker, and draweth the hearer.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlii. s. 1) We are all from God. That which belongs peculiarly and principally to the Son, He omits the mention of, as being unsuitable to the weakness of His hearers.

### **From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:**

#### **6:27a The Eternal Food**

#### **Do Not Be Nailed to the Things of This Life.**

Chrysostom: To "take no thought" does not mean "not to work" but "not to be nailed to the things of this life." In other words, do not worry about tomorrow's comfort; in fact, consider it superfluous. There are

those who do no work and yet lay up treasures for tomorrow. There are also others who do work and yet are careful for nothing. Carefulness and work are not the same thing. People do not work because they trust in their work but so that they may give to the person who is in need. Homilies on the Gospel of John 44.1.

### **Temporal Food Should Lead to Eternal Food.**

Chrysostom: I fed your bodies, he says, so that after this you might seek that other food that endures, which nourishes the soul. But you run right back to that food that is temporal. Therefore you do not understand that I lead you not to this imperfect food but to that which nourishes not the body but the soul. Homilies on the Gospel of John 44.1.

### **6:27b The Father's Seal**

#### **The Son Is the Entire Imprint of the Father.**

Hilary of Poitiers: It is the nature of a seal to exhibit the whole form of the figure graven on it and that an impression taken from it reproduces it in every respect. And since it receives the whole of that which is impressed, it displays also in itself entirely whatever has been impressed on it. Yet this comparison is not adequate to exemplify the divine birth, because seals presuppose matter, difference of nature and an act of impression where the likeness of stronger natures is impressed on things of a more yielding nature.... What God had sealed should display in itself none other than the form of the God who sealed it.... As far as his being in the form of God by virtue of God's seal on him, he still remained God. But inasmuch as he was to take the form of a servant and become obedient unto death, not grasping at his equality with God, he emptied himself through obedience to take the form of a slave. And he emptied himself of the form of God, that is, of that in which he was equal with God—not that he regarded his equality with God as any encroachment—although he was in the form of God and equal with God and sealed by God as God. On the Trinity 8.44–45.

#### **Through Christ We Can Receive the Divine Seal.**

Cyril of Alexandria: The countenance of God the Father is the Son who is the imprint of God. But the light of God is the grace that passes into creation through the Spirit, by which we are refashioned to God

through faith. We receive through God, as with a seal, the being conformed to his Son. Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.5.

### **The Mark of Perfection and Love.**

Ambrose: [Christ] is our seal, which is the mark of perfection and of love because the Father, loving the Son, set his seal on him. Isaac, or the Soul 8.75.

### **6:28–29 The Work of God**

#### **Faith in God's Sealed Son.**

Hilary of Poitiers: In setting forth the mystery of his incarnation and his Godhead, our Lord has also uttered the teaching of our faith and hope that we should work not for that food that perishes but that which abides for ever; that we should remember that this food of eternity is given to us by the Son of man as sealed by God the Father; that we should know that this is the work of God: even faith in him whom he has sent. And who is it whom the Father has sent? Even he whom the Father has sealed. And who is he whom the Father has sealed? In truth, the Son of man, even he who gives the food of eternal life. On the Trinity 8.42.

#### **This Faith Is the Work of God.**

Augustine: Why do you make ready your teeth and stomach? Believe, and you have eaten. Faith is, indeed, distinguished from works, as the apostle says, "that a person is justified by faith without works." And there are works that seem to be good ... because they are not referred to that end from which they are good. "For the end of the law is Christ, unto justice to everyone who believes." Therefore, he did not wish to separate faith from work, but he said that faith itself is a work. For this is the faith that works by love. He did not say, "This is your work" but "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent," so that he who takes glory may take glory in the Lord. Tractates on the Gospel of John 25.12.1–2.

## **6:30 Looking for a Sign**

### **They Ask for Yet Another Miracle.**

Chrysostom: There is nothing worse, nothing more shameful, than gluttony, which clouds the judgment and reduces the soul to satisfying appetites.... For instance, nothing can be more unreasonable than their asking for another miracle, as if none had been given already. And they do not even leave the choice of the miracle to our Lord but would oblige him to give them just that sign that was given to their ancestors: "Our fathers ate manna in the desert." ... There were many miracles performed in Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the desert, and yet they remembered this one the best of any. Such is the force of appetite.... They do not mention this miracle as the work either of God or of Moses, in order to avoid raising Jesus on the one hand to an equality with God or lowering him on the other by a comparison with Moses. Rather, they take the middle ground, only saying, "Our fathers ate manna in the desert." Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.1.

## **6:31–32 The True Bread from Heaven**

### **Jesus Gradually Reveals Himself As the Bread of Life.**

Chrysostom: He calls this the "true bread," not because the miracle of the manna was false but because it was a type and not the very truth itself. But in mentioning Moses, Jesus does not compare himself with him, for the Jews did not as yet prefer him to Moses, of whom they still had a higher opinion. So that after saying, "Moses did not give," he does not say "I give" but says that the Father, and not Moses, gives. When they heard this, the people replied, "Give us this bread to eat." They still thought that it was something material, and they yet expected to satisfy their appetites, and so they quickly ran to him. And what does Christ do? Leading them on little by little, he says, "The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.1.

### **Getting Them Accustomed to His Bread and Wine.**

Ephrem the Syrian: From a little bread, our Lord made an abundance of bread in the midst of the desert, and in Cana he turned water into wine. At first he set out to give instruction to their mouths about his bread and wine, until the time came for him to give them his blood and his body also. He gave them the taste of a superabundance of transitory bread and wine in order to give them an eager desire for the

superabundance of his living body and blood. He gave them these lesser things without price, so that they might know that this gift of his, of highest value, was free. He gave to them freely those things that they were able to purchase from him at a price. He therefore did not sell to them anything that they were able to buy, so that they might know that there was no fee he required from them for that which they did not have; for they were able to pay the price of his bread and wine, but they could not pay the price of his body and blood. It was in this way that he not only gave to us freely, but he was even enticing us as well; for he gave these lesser things freely to captivate us to come and receive this of highest value, which is without price. These lesser things that he gave of bread and wine delighted the mouth; that [highest gift] of body and blood brings aid to the mind. He captivated us with these things, which bring pleasure to the palate, in order to draw us to that which brings life to [our] souls. For this reason, he hid the sweetness in the wine he made, so that they might know what treasure is hidden in his life-giving blood. Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 12.1.

### **6:33 The Bread of God Gives Life**

#### **The Manna Foreshadowed the True Bread.**

Cyril of Alexandria: Imagine Christ saying something like this: "You foolishly suppose that the manna is 'the bread from heaven,' since it merely fed the people of Israel in the wilderness while there were countless other nations throughout the world. You suppose that God wanted to demonstrate his loving kindness so narrowly as to give food to only one people?... Let no one think," says Christ, "that the manna was truly the bread from heaven; but one should rather choose that which is clearly able to feed and to completely give life to the whole world." ... The only begotten of God the Father is the true manna, the bread from heaven, given to all rational creatures by God the Father. Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.6.

### **6:34 Give Us This Bread**

#### **The Desire for Bread and Water That Never Fail.**

Augustine: As the Samaritan woman, to whom it was said, "Whoever drinks of this water shall never thirst," thought he meant natural water and said, "Sir, give me this water," thinking she might never be in want again; in the same way these people say, "O Lord, give us this bread" that refreshes and sustains us and yet never fails. Tractates on the Gospel of John 25.13.

## **6:35 Jesus Is the Bread of Life**

### **Desire the Bread of God.**

Ignatius of Antioch: Do not talk about Jesus Christ while you desire the world. Do not let envy dwell among you.... I take no pleasure in corruptible food or the pleasures of this life. I want the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ who is of the seed of David; and for drink I want his blood, which is incorruptible love. Epistle to the Romans 7.

### **The Bread Is a Reference to the Godhead.**

Chrysostom: Now he proceeds to commit to them mysteries. First, he speaks of his Godhead, saying, "I am the bread of life." For this is not spoken of his body since he says toward the end, "And the bread that I shall give is my flesh." At present, [bread of life] refers to his Godhead, which is "bread" through God the Word, just as this bread [of the sacrament] through the Spirit descending on it, is made heavenly bread. Here he does not use witnesses as in his former address, for he had the miracle of the loaves to witness to him and also had the Jews themselves for a while pretending to believe him. In the former case they opposed and accused him. This is the reason why here he declares himself. Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.2.

### **The Bread of Life Gives Power over Death.**

Cyril of Alexandria: In effect, Jesus is saying, "I am the bread of life," not bodily bread, which merely eliminates the physical suffering brought on by hunger, but rather that bread that refashions the entire living being to eternal life. The human being, who had been created for eternal life, is now given power over death. Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.6.

### **Christ Preserves Our Body for Incorruption.**

Theodore of Heraclea: Since earthly bread customarily does give life to our weak nature of the flesh, [Christ] also does this through the energy of the Spirit by making the spirit alive and preserving the body for incorruptible incorruption after the resurrection and giving this to those who believe in him. Certainly he calls his flesh the bread of life in this place since it is eaten in the sacrament. Fragments on John 33.

### **The Benefits of Frequent Communion.**

Cyril of Alexandria: What then does Christ promise? Nothing corruptible, but rather that blessing in the participation of his holy flesh and blood that restores humanity wholly to incorruption so that it should need none of the things that normally drive off the death of the flesh, for example, food and drink.... The holy body of Christ gives life to those who have it within themselves, and by holding them together, [it] grants incorruption, inasmuch as it is commingled with our bodies.... Since these things are so, let those who have been baptized and tasted the divine grace understand this: if they are sluggish or reluctant about going to church and for long periods of time keep away from the eucharistic gift through Christ, feigning a pernicious reverence by not partaking of him sacramentally, they exclude themselves from eternal life inasmuch as they decline to be enlivened. Thus, their refusal [to partake of the Eucharist] though seeming to be an expression of reverence, is turned into a snare and an offense. Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.6.

### **The Bread of Christ Is the Food of Saints.**

Ambrose: [Christ] is a rich treasure, for his bread is rich. And “rich” is an apt term, for one who has eaten this bread will be unable to feel hunger. He gave it to the apostles to distribute to a believing people, and today he gives it to us. For he, as a priest, daily consecrates it with his own words. Therefore this bread has become the food of saints. On the Patriarchs 9.38.

### **Jesus Gives Real Food, Real Life.**

Theodore of Heraclea: Because we have all died to sin—or because after the eternal, incorruptible resurrection he will give life to those who believe, when there will be neither food nor drink perceived by the senses—therefore we “will certainly not hunger.” To be sure, the manna of those who ate it “in the desert” nourished the body for a little while, but it did not contribute anything to the soul to help it live virtuously and nobly. All of them (except for a few) were discovered to have been godless. But the living Bread recovered the souls of the believers by his words of life and procured real life for the world. Fragments on John 31.

## **6:36 Seeing and Not Believing**

### **They Saw the Miracles and Scripture.**

Chrysostom: When he says, “You have seen me and yet have not believed,” he alludes partly to his miracles, partly to the testimony from the Scriptures. “For they,” he says, “testify of me.” Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.2.

## **6:37 All That the Father Gives Me**

### **Neither Faith Nor Unbelief Is an Accident.**

Chrysostom: When he says, “All that the Father gives me shall come to me,” he touches on their unbelief, showing that whoever does not believe on him transgresses the will of the Father. He covertly shows that unbelievers are not only at variance with him but also with the Father. For if this is [the Son’s] will, and if this is the reason he came, that is, that he might save the entire world, then those who do not believe transgress his will. When, therefore, he says, the Father guides someone, there is nothing that hinders that person from coming to [Jesus]. ... And Paul says that [the Son] delivers them up to the Father. Now just as the Father, when he gives, does not take from himself, so neither does the Son take from himself when he gives up. The Son is said to give up to the Father because we are brought to the Father by him. And at the same time, we read that it was the Father “by whom you were called to the fellowship of his Son,” that is, by the will of the Father. ... Faith in me, he intimates here, is no ordinary thing or one that comes from human reason, but [it] needs a revelation from above. And this he establishes throughout his discourse, showing that this faith requires a noble sort of soul, and one drawn on by God....

The expression “that the Father gives me” shows that it is no accident whether a person believes or not. It shows that belief is not the work of human reasoning but requires a revelation from on high and a mind devout enough to receive the revelation. “Whoever then,” our Lord says, “comes to me, shall be saved,” meaning they shall be greatly cared for. For to save such as these I took up flesh and the form of a servant. Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.2–3.

### **Pride Casts Out, Humility Restores.**

Augustine: This is the reason why he does not cast out those who come to him. "For I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me." The soul departed from God because it was proud.... Pride casts us out, humility restores us.... When a physician in the treatment of a disease cures certain outward symptoms but not the cause that produces them, his cure is only temporary. So long as the cause remains, the disease may return.... That the cause then of all diseases, that is, pride, might be eradicated, the Son of God humbled himself. Why are you proud, O man? The Son of God humbled himself for you. It might shame you, perhaps, to imitate a humble man; but imitate at least a humble God.... And this is the proof of his humility: "I came not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me." Pride does its own will; humility does the will of God. For this very reason, therefore, I will not cast out the one who comes to me, because I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. I came to teach humility by being humble myself. Whoever comes to me is made a member of me. Such a person is necessarily humble, because he will not do his own will but the will of God; and therefore [this person] is not cast out. He was cast out, as proud.... But he will not cast us out because we are members of the one who desired to be our head by teaching us humility. Tractates on the Gospel of John 25.15–16, 18.

### **6:38 The Will of God**

#### **Christ Manifests Obedience.**

Hilary of Poitiers: It was not that he himself was unwilling but that he might manifest his obedience as the result of his Father's will. For his own will is to do his Father's. His will is to carry out the Father's will. On the Trinity 3.9.

### **6:39 Losing Nothing Given**

#### **The Lost Sheep Are Returned.**

Jerome: Christ speaks here of the whole of his humanity, which he had taken on him in its entirety at his birth. Then shall the sheep that was lost and was wandering in the lower world be carried healthy on the Savior's shoulders. And the sheep that was sick with sin shall be taken care of by the mercy of the Judge. Against John of Jerusalem 34.

### **Foreknowledge and Perseverance.**

Augustine: They therefore who by God's unerring providence are foreknown and predestined, called, justified, glorified, even before their new birth, or before they are born at all, are already the children of God and absolutely cannot perish. These truly come to Christ.... By him there is given also perseverance in good even to the end. For it is not given except to those who will not perish since those who do not persevere will perish. On Rebuke and Grace 23.

### **6:40 The Will of the Father**

#### **Wills in Concert.**

Chrysostom: But what do you mean? Do you have one will and he has another? No, certainly. Look at what he says afterwards: "And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have everlasting life." Is not then this your will too?... For the Son quickens whom he will. ... He says then, I came to do nothing but what the Father wills, for I have no will distinct from my Father's. All things that the Father has are mine. But he does not say that here. He reserves these higher truths for the end of his ministry. Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.3.

#### **Whoever Sees and Believes.**

Augustine: He has said two things: "This is the work of God that you should believe in the one whom he has sent," while here he added, "whoever sees and believes." The Jews saw but did not believe; they had the one condition, lacked the other. How could they attain to eternal life without the other? The reason those who saw did not attain eternal life was because they did not also believe. If so, what about us who have believed but have not seen? If it is those two things that earn eternal life, seeing and believing—and whoever is lacking one of them cannot attain to the reward of eternal life—what are we to do? The Jews [who saw him] lacked the one; we the other. They had seeing but lacked believing. We have believing but lack seeing. Well, as regards our having believing and lacking seeing, we have prophetically been declared blessed by the Lord himself just as Thomas, one of the Twelve, was blessed when he felt his scars by touching them. Sermon 14a.5.

### **Faith Leads to Perfection at the Resurrection.**

Clement of Alexandria: Faith, so to speak, is the attempt generated in time; the final result is the attainment of the promise secured for eternity. Now the Lord himself has most clearly revealed the equality of salvation when he said, "This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day." As far as possible in this world, which is what he means by the last day—and which is preserved till the time that it shall end—we believe that we are made perfect. Wherefore he says, "The one who believes on the Son has everlasting life." If then, those who have believed have life, what remains beyond the possession of eternal life? Nothing is lacking in faith as it is perfect and complete in itself. Christ the Educator 1.6.

### **The Resurrection Fulfills the Prayer "Thy Kingdom Come."**

Chrysostom: No one who has lived correctly disbelieves the resurrection, but every day they pray and repeat that holy sentence, "thy kingdom come." Who then are the ones who disbelieve the resurrection? Those who have unholy ways and an unclean life. As the prophet says, "His ways are profane at all times. Your judgments are removed from before him." For one cannot possibly live a pure life without believing in the resurrection, since they who are conscious of no iniquity both speak of and wish for and believe in it, that they may receive their reward. Homilies on the Gospel of John 45.3.

### **The Operation of the Holy Trinity.**

Cyril of Alexandria: The Father then brings to the Son, by knowledge and God-befitting contemplation, those to whom he decreed the divine grace. The Son receives and revives them, and engrafting his own good into those who are of their own nature apt to decay and shedding on them as a spark of fire the life-giving power of the Spirit, re-forms them throughout unto immortality. But when you hear that the Father brings them and that the Son gives the power of renewed living to those that run to him, do not go off into absurd fancies, as though each were supposed to do individually and severally what belongs appropriately by nature to each. The Father is co-worker with the Son, and likewise the Son with the Father, and our salvation and recuperation from death to life is the work, so to say, of the whole Holy Trinity. Commentary on the Gospel of John 4.1.

### **The Twofold Resurrection.**

Augustine: "Whoever sees the Son and believes on him should have everlasting life," that is, by believing, by passing over to life, as at the first resurrection. But this is only the first resurrection. He alludes to the second when he says, "And I will raise him up at the last day." Tractates on the Gospel of John 25.19.

### **6:41 The Jews Murmured**

#### **Lacking Hunger of the Inner Person.**

Augustine: But they were far from being fit for that heavenly bread and did not know how to hunger for it.... For this bread requires the hunger of the inner person. Tractates on the Gospel of John 26.1.

#### **The Carnal Question.**

Chrysostom: His meaning is, "You must hear spiritually what relates to me, for he who hears carnally neither profits nor gathers any advantage." It was carnal to question how Jesus came down from heaven, to consider him as the son of Joseph, to ask, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" All this was carnal when, instead, they ought to have understood the matter in a mystical and spiritual sense. "But," says someone, "how could they understand what 'eating flesh' might mean?" Then it was their duty to wait for the proper time and enquire, and not to abandon him. Homilies on the Gospel of John 47.2.

### **6:42 Is This Not Jesus, the Son of Joseph?**

#### **Ignorance of Jesus' Miraculous Birth.**

Chrysostom: It is evident that they did not yet know of his miraculous birth, for they call him the son of Joseph. Nor are they blamed for this. Our Lord does not reply, "I am not the son of Joseph," not because he was his son but because the miracle of his birth would have overpowered them. And if the birth according to the flesh were above their belief, how much more that higher and ineffable birth? Homilies on the Gospel of John 46.1.

## **6:43 Murmuring Among Themselves**

### **Murmuring Against the Doctrine of Grace.**

Augustine: As if to say, I know why you do not hunger after this bread and so cannot understand it and do not seek it.... “No one can come to me unless the Father who has sent me draws him.” This is the doctrine of grace: none comes unless they are drawn. But whom the Father draws, and whom not, and why he draws one and not another, do not presume to decide if you want to avoid falling into error. Take the doctrine as it is given to you: and, if you are not drawn, pray that you may be. Tractates on the Gospel of John 26.2.

## **6:44 The Father Draws Us**

### **Jesus Not Subordinate to the Father.**

Ambrose: And you say that the Son of God is subject by reason of weakness—the Son, to whom the Father brings men and women that he may raise them up in the last day. Does this seem in your eyes to be subjection where the kingdom is prepared for the Father and the Father brings it to the Son? There is no place for perversion of words since the Son gives the kingdom to the Father and none is preferred before him. For as the Father gives to the Son, and the Son, again, to the Father, here are plain proofs of love and regard: seeing that they [i.e., Father and Son] give to each other that neither he who receives obtains, as it were, what was another’s, nor he that gives loses anything. On the Christian Faith 2.12.104.

### **Christ Leads to the Father and the Father to Christ.**

Hilary of Poitiers: There is no approach to the Father except through Christ. But there is also no approach to Christ, unless the Father draws us. On the Trinity 11.33.

### **We Have Come to Christ by the Gift of Faith.**

Augustine: How have you come? You have come by believing, but you have not yet come through to the end. We are still on the road. We have come, but we have not yet come through. “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before him with trembling, in case the Lord might be angry and you perish from the way of justice.” When you arrogate to yourself the discovery of the way of justice, be afraid of perishing from the way of justice through this very arrogance. “I have come,” he says, “I have come of my own accord, I

have come of my own free will." Why such consternation? Do you want to hear that even this much has been bestowed on you as well? Listen to him calling: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Sermon 30.10.

### **The Revelation of Truth Is the Drawing.**

Augustine: Do not think that you are drawn against your will. The soul is drawn also by love.... And in case someone says to us, "How can I believe with the will if I am drawn?" I say that it is not enough to be drawn by the will; you are drawn even by delight. What is it to be drawn by delight? "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he shall give you the desires of your heart." There is a certain craving of the heart to which that bread of heaven is sweet. If the poet could say, "Every person is drawn by his own pleasure"—not necessity but pleasure; not obligation but delight—how much more boldly ought we to say that a person is drawn to Christ when he delights in the truth, when he delights in blessedness, delights in righteousness, delights in everlasting life? Do not the bodily senses have their pleasures, and the soul its?... Give me one who loves, who longs, who burns, who sighs for the source of his being and his eternal home, and he will know what I mean....

But why did he say, "Except my Father draw him"? If we are to be drawn, let us be drawn by him to whom his love said, "We will run after the fragrance of your ointment." But let us see what is meant by this. The Father draws to the Son those who believe on the Son because they consider that God is his Father. For the Father begat the Son equal to himself. And those who think and believe truly and seriously that he on whom they believe is equal to the Father, these are the ones the Father draws to the Son. Arius believed the Son to be a creature; the Father did not draw [Arius].... One whom the Father has drawn said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ... And so was said, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father which is in heaven." This revelation is itself the drawing.... For if earthly objects, when put before us, draw us ... how much more shall Christ, when revealed by the Father? For what does the soul long for more than truth?... Here, we can more easily be hungered than satisfied, especially if we have good hope.... There, we shall be filled.... This is why he adds, "And I will raise him up at the last day," as if he said, he shall be filled with that for which he now thirsts at the resurrection of the dead, for I will raise him up. Tractates on the Gospel of John 26.4–6.

## **6:45 All Shall Be Taught by God**

### **Those Unworthy of the Office.**

Gregory of Nazianzus: I was ashamed of all those others who ... intrude into the most sacred offices and, before becoming worthy to approach the temples, lay claim to the sanctuary. They push and thrust around the holy table as if they thought this order to be a means of livelihood instead of a pattern of virtue, or an absolute authority instead of a ministry of which we must give account. In fact they are almost more in number than those whom they govern.... Soon enough, as time and this evil alike progress, they will not even have anyone left to rule when all are teachers instead of taught by God, as the promise says, and all prophesy. In Defense of His Flight to Pontus, Oration 2.8.

### **Faith Can Be Learned Only from God.**

Chrysostom: He then shows the way in which the Father draws. "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.'" You see the excellence of faith: that it cannot be learned from people or by the teaching of people but only from God himself.... If then all shall be taught by God, how is it that some shall not believe? Because all here only means in general. Besides, the prophecy does not mean absolutely everyone but all who have the desire. For the Teacher sits ready to impart what he has to everyone and dispenses his truth to all. Homilies on the Gospel of John 46.1.

### **No One Comes in Any Other Way.**

Augustine: Or think of it in this way. When a schoolmaster is the only one in a town, we say loosely, "This person teaches all here to read," not that all learn from him but that he teaches all who do learn. And in the same way we say that God teaches all to come to Christ: not that all do come but that no one comes in any other way. Predestination of the Saints 14.

### **The Father Taught, the Son Spoke.**

Augustine: See then how the Father draws; not by laying a necessity on a person but by teaching the truth. See how he draws: "They shall all be taught by God." To draw belongs to God: "Everyone who has heard and has learned of the Father comes to me." What then? If every person who has heard and learned of the Father comes to Christ, has Christ taught nothing here? What if people saw not the Father teaching

but the Son? So then, the Father taught and the Son spoke.... As I teach you by my word, [the Son says], so the Father teaches by his Word.... But the Son himself explains the matter, if we read on: "Not that anyone has seen the Father except him who is from God, he has seen the Father." ... This is as if he said: When I tell you, "Everyone that has heard and learned of the Father," do not say to yourselves, We have never seen the Father, so how then can we have learned from him? Hear him then in me [Jesus].... I know the Father and am from him, just as a word is from him who speaks it; that is, not the mere passing sound but that which remains with the speaker and draws the hearer. Tractates on the Gospel of John 26.7–9.

### **6:46 Only He Who Is from God Has Seen God**

#### **Only Members of the Godhead Fully See God.**

Cyril of Jerusalem: The angels behold as much as they can bear, and archangels as much as they are able; and thrones and dominions more than the former, but still less than his worthiness. For with the Son, the Holy Spirit alone can rightly behold him. For "he searches all things and knows even the deep things of God," as indeed the only begotten Son also with the Holy Spirit knows the Father fully. "For neither," he says, "does anyone know the Father, except the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him." For he [the Son] fully beholds and reveals God through the Spirit to each person as he is able to receive, since the only begotten Son together with the Holy Spirit is a partaker of the Father's Godhead. He who was begotten knows him who begat. And he who begat knows him who is begotten. Since angels then are ignorant (for the Only Begotten reveals him through the Holy Spirit to each according to his own capacity, as we have said), let no one be ashamed to confess his ignorance. Catechetical Lectures 6.6.