

## John: 6:47–58

### From Catena Aurea:

47. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

48. I am that bread of life.

49. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. s. 10.) Our Lord wishes to reveal what He is; Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, hath everlasting life. As if He said; He that believeth on Me hath Me: but what is it to have Me? It is to have eternal life: for the Word which was in the beginning with God is life eternal, and the life was the light of men. Life underwent death, that life might kill death.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** ([Nic.] Theoph.) The multitude being urgent for bodily food, and reminding Him of that which was given to their fathers, He tells them that the manna was only a type of that spiritual food which was now to be tasted in reality, I am that bread of life.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlv. 1) He calls Himself the bread of life, because He constitutes one life, both present, and to come.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 11) And because they had taunted Him with the manna, He adds, Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. Your fathers they are, for ye are like them; murmuring sons of murmuring fathers. For in nothing did that people offend God more, than by their murmurs against Him. And therefore are they dead, because what they saw they believed, what they did not see they believed not, nor understood.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvi. 2) The addition, In the wilderness, is not put in without meaning, but to remind them how short a time the manna lasted; only till the entrance into the land of promise. And because the

bread which Christ gave seemed inferior to the manna, in that the latter had come down from heaven, while the former was of this world, He adds, This is the bread which cometh down from heaven.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. s. 12) This was the bread the manna typified, this was the bread the altar typified. Both the one and the other were sacraments, differing in symbol, alike in the thing signified. Hear the Apostle, They did all eat the same spiritual meat. (1 Cor. 10)

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xvi. 2) He then gives them a strong reason for believing that they were given for higher privileges than their fathers. Their fathers eat manna and were dead; whereas of this bread He says, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. The difference of the two is evident from the difference of their ends. By bread here is meant wholesome doctrine, and faith in Him, or His body: for these are the preservatives of the soul.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 11) But are we, who eat the bread that cometh down from heaven, relieved from death? From visible and carnal death, the death of the body, we are not: we shall die, even as they died. But from spiritual death which their fathers suffered, we are delivered. Moses and many acceptable of God, eat the manna, and died not, because they understood that visible food in a spiritual sense, spiritually tasted it, and were spiritually filled with it. And we too at this day receive the visible food; but the Sacrament is one thing, the virtue of the Sacrament another. Many a one receiveth from the Altar, and perisheth in receiving; eating and drinking his own damnation, (1 Cor. 11:29) as saith the Apostle. To eat then the heavenly bread spiritually, is to bring to the Altar an innocent mind. Sins, though they be daily, are not deadly. Before you go to the Altar, attend to the prayer you repeat: Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (Matt. 6:12) If thou forgivest, thou art forgiven: approach confidently; it is bread, not poison. None then that eateth of this bread, shall die. But we speak of the virtue of the Sacrament, not the visible Sacrament itself; of the inward, not of the outward eater.

**THEOPHYLACT.** (in v. 83) By becoming incarnate, He was not then first man, and afterwards assumed Divinity, as Nestorius fables.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 13) was The manna too came down from heaven; but the manna was shadow, this is substance.

6:51

51. —And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Gloss. Nic.) Our Lord pronounces Himself to be bread, not only in respect of that Divinity, which feeds all things, but also in respect of that human nature, which was assumed by the Word of God: And the bread, He says, that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

**THEOPHYLACT.** Which I shall give: this shews His power; for it shews that He was not crucified as a servant, in subjection to the Father, but of his own accord; for though He is said to have been given up by the Father, yet He delivered Himself up also. And observe, the bread which is taken by us in the mysteries, is not only the sign of Christ's flesh, but is itself the very flesh of Christ; for He does not say, The bread which I will give, is the sign of My flesh, but, is My flesh. The bread is by a mystical benediction conveyed in unutterable words, and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, transmuted into the flesh of Christ. But why see we not the flesh? Because, if the flesh were seen, it would revolt us to such a degree, that we should be unable to partake of it. And therefore in condescension to our infirmity, the mystical food is given to us under an appearance suitable to our minds. He gave His flesh for the life of the world, in that, by dying, He destroyed death. By the life of the world too, I understand the resurrection; our Lord's death having brought about the resurrection of the whole human race. It may mean too the sanctified, beatified, spiritual life; for though all have not attained to this life, yet our Lord gave Himself for the world, and, as far as lies in Him, the whole world is sanctified.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 13) But when does flesh receive the bread which He calls His flesh? The faithful know and receive the Body of Christ, if they labour to be the body of Christ. And they become the body of Christ, if they study to live by the Spirit of Christ: for that which lives by the Spirit of Christ, is the body of Christ. This bread the Apostle sets forth, where he says, We being many are one body. (1 Cor. 12:12) O sacrament of mercy, O sign of unity, O bond of love! Whoso wishes to live, let him draw nigh, believe, be incorporated, that he may be quickened.

6:52–54

52. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

53. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. s. 14) The Jews not understanding what was the bread of peace, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Whereas they who eat the bread strive not among themselves, for God makes them to dwell together in unity.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvi. 1) As they thought it impossible that He should do as He said, i. e. give them His flesh to eat, He shews them that it was not only possible, but necessary: Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 15) As if He said, The sense in which that bread is eaten, and the mode of eating it, ye know not; but, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 15) And that they might not understand him to speak of this life, and make that an occasion of striving, He adds, Hath eternal life. This then he hath not who eateth not that flesh, nor drinketh that blood. The temporal life men may have without Him, the eternal they cannot. This is not true of material food. If we do not take that indeed, we shall not live, neither do we live, if we take it: for either disease, or old age, or some accident kills us after all. Whereas this meat and drink, i. e. the Body and Blood of Christ, is such that he that taketh it not hath not life, and he that taketh it hath life, even life eternal.

**THEOPHYLACT.** (in v. 52) For it is not the flesh of man simply, but of God: and it makes man divine, by inebriating him, as it were, with divinity.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Civ. Dei, l. xxi. c. 25.) There are some who promise men deliverance from eternal punishment, if they are washed in Baptism and partake of Christ's Body, whatever lives they live. The Apostle however contradicts them, where he says, The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19. et seq.) Let us examine what is meant here. He who is in the unity of His body, (i. e. one of the Christian members,) the Sacrament of which body the faithful receive when they communicate at the Altar; he is truly said to eat the body, and drink the blood of Christ. And heretics and schismatics, who are cut off from the unity of the body, may receive the same Sacrament; but it does not profit them, nay, rather is hurtful, as tending to make their judgment heavier, or their forgiveness later. Nor ought they to feel secure in their abandoned and damnable ways, who, by the iniquity of their lives,

desert righteousness, i. e. Christ; either by fornication, or other sins of the like kind. Such are not to be said to eat the body of Christ; forasmuch as they are not to be counted among the members of Christ. For, not to mention other things, men cannot be members of Christ, and at the same time members of a harlot.

**AUGUSTINE.** (super Joan. c. xxvi. 15) By this meat and drink then, He would have us understand the society of His body, and His members, which is the Church, in the predestined, and called, and justified, and glorified saints and believers. The Sacrament whereof, i. e. of the unity of the body and blood of Christ, is administered, in some places daily, in others on such and such days from the Lord's Table: and from the Lord's Table it is received by some to their salvation, by others to their condemnation. But the thing itself of which this is the Sacrament, is for our salvation to every one who partakes of it, for condemnation to none. To prevent us supposing that those who, by virtue of that meat and drink, were promised eternal life, would not die in the body, He adds, And I will, raise him up at the last day; i. e. to that eternal life, a spiritual rest, which the spirits of the Saints enter into. But neither shall the body be defrauded of eternal life, but shall be endowed with it at the resurrection of the dead in the last day.

6:55–59

55. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

59. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvii. 1) i. e. this is no enigma, or parable, but ye must really eat the body of Christ; or He means to say that the true meat was He who saved the soul.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 17) Or thus: Whereas men desire meat and drink to satisfy hunger and thirst, this effect is only really produced by that meat and drink, which makes the receivers of it immortal and incorruptible; i. e. the society of Saints, where is peace and unity, full and perfect. On which account our Lord has chosen for the types of His body and blood, things which become one out of many. Bread is a

quantity of grains united into one mass, wine a quantity of grapes squeezed together. Then He explains what it is to eat His body and drink His blood: He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. So then to partake of that meat and that drink, is to dwell in Christ and Christ in thee. He that dwelleth not in Christ, and in whom Christ dwelleth not, neither eateth His flesh, nor drinketh His blood: but rather eateth and drinketh the sacrament of it to his own damnation.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvii. 1) Or, having given a promise of eternal life to those that eat Him, He says this to confirm it: He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Verb. Dom.) As for those, as indeed there are many, who either eat that flesh and drink that blood hypocritically, or, who having eaten, become apostates, do they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them? Nay, but there is a certain mode of eating that flesh, and drinking that blood, in the which he that eateth and drinketh, dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Civ. Dei, l. xxi. c. 25) That is to say, such an one eateth the body and drinketh the blood of Christ not in the sacramental sense, but in reality.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvi) And because I live, it is manifest that he will live also: As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, even so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. (Aug. de Verb. Dom. [Nic.]). As if He said, As the Father liveth, so do I live; adding, lest you should think Him unbegotten, By the Father, meaning that He has His source in the Father. He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me; the life here meant is not life simply, but the justified life: for even unbelievers live, who never eat of that flesh at all. Nor is it of the general resurrection He speaks, (for all will rise again,) but of the resurrection to glory, and reward.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. s. 19) He saith not, As I eat the Father, and live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. For the Son does not grow better by partaking of the Father, as we do by partaking of the Son, i. e. of His one body and blood, which this eating and drinking signifies. So that His saying, I live by the Father, because He is from Him, must not be understood as detracting from His equality. Nor do the words, Even he that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me, give us the equality that He has. He does not equalize, but only mediates between God and man. If, however, we understand the words, I live by the Father, in the sense of those below, My Father is greater than I, (c. 14:28) then it is as if He said, That I live by the Father, i. e. refer my life to Him, as my superior, my1 humiliation in my incarnation is the cause; but He who lives by Me, lives by Me by virtue of partaking of My flesh.

**HILARY.** (vii. de Trin. c. 14) Of the truth then of the body and blood of Christ, no room for doubting remains: for, by the declaration of our Lord Himself, and by the teaching of our own faith, the flesh is really flesh, and the blood really blood. This then is our principle of life. While we are in the flesh, Christ dwelleth in us by His flesh. (c.14:19) And we shall live by Him, according as He liveth. If then we live naturally by partaking of Him according to the flesh, He also liveth naturally by the indwelling of the Father according to the Spirit. His birth did not give Him an alien or different nature from the Father.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. c. 20) That we who cannot obtain eternal life of ourselves, might live by the eating that bread, He descended from heaven: This is the bread which cometh down from heaven.

**HILARY.** (de Trin. x. c. 18.) He calls Himself the bread, because He is the origin of His own body. And lest it should be thought that the virtue and nature of the Word had given way to the flesh, He calls the bread His flesh, that, inasmuch as the bread came down from heaven, it might be seen that His body was not of human conception, but a heavenly body. To say that the bread is His own, is to declare that the Word assumed His body Himself.

**THEOPHYLACT.** For we do not eat God simply, God being impalpable and incorporeal; nor again, the flesh of man simply, which would not profit us. But God having taken flesh into union with Himself, that flesh is quickening. Not that it has changed its own for the Divine nature; but, just as heated iron remains iron, with the action of the heat in it; so our Lord's flesh is quickening, as being the flesh of the Word of God.

**AUGUSTINE.** (Tr. xxvi. 20) The death here meant is death eternal. For even those who eat Christ are subject to natural death; but they live for ever, because Christ is everlasting life.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. xlvii. 1) For if it was possible without harvest or fruit of the earth, or any such thing, to preserve the lives of the Israelites of old for forty years, much more will He be able to do this with that spiritual food, of which the manna is the type. He knew how precious a thing life was in men's eyes, and therefore repeats His promise of life often; just as the Old Testament had done; (Exod. 20:12) only that it only offered length of life, He life without end. (Deut. 22:7) This promise was an abolition of that sentence of death, which sin had brought upon us. These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum; (1 Kings 3:14) where many displays of His power took place. (Ps. 21:4; 91:16) He taught in the synagogue and in the temple, (Prov. 3:2) with the view of attracting the multitude, and as a sign that He was not acting in opposition to the Father.

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

6:47 One Who Believes Has Eternal Life

### **Life Killed Death.**

Augustine: Our Lord wishes to reveal what he was. He might have said that he who believes in me has me.... But what is it “to have me”? It is to have eternal life. Eternal life took death on itself; eternal life willed to die.... Life underwent death, that life might kill death.... For eternal life is the Word that “in the beginning was with God, and the Word was God, and the life was the light of humanity.” The same eternal life gave eternal life also to the flesh that it assumed. He came to die; but on the third day he rose again. Between the Word taking flesh and the flesh rising again, death, which came between, was consumed. Tractates on the Gospel of John 26.10.

### **6:48 I Am the Bread of Life**

#### **Sin Has Its Own Special Bread Too.**

Athanasius: God by his living Word enlivens everyone and gives his Word as food and life to the saints, as the Lord declares, “I am the bread of life.” ... But sin, too, has its own special bread—of death, calling to those who are lovers of pleasure and lack understanding. [Sin] says, “Touch with delight secret bread and sweet waters that are stolen.” For one who merely touches them has no idea that what is born from the earth perishes with [sin]. For even when the sinner thinks he is going to find pleasure, the end result of that food is anything but pleasant, as the Wisdom of God again reminds us: “Bread of deceit is pleasant to a person; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.” ... The end result is, he eats and rejoices for a little while, but afterwards he spurns it the further his soul has moved away [from God]. For the fool does not know that those who depart far from God shall perish. ... “Leave foolishness behind so that you may live, seek understanding so that you may remain.” For the bread of Wisdom is living fruit, as the Lord said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven: if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever.” For when Israel ate of the manna, which was indeed pleasant and wonderful, they still died, and whoever ate it did not live forever as a consequence of eating it; rather, the whole multitude died in the wilderness....



Now wicked people hunger for bread like this, for weak souls will hunger. But the righteous alone, being prepared, shall be satisfied, saying, "I shall behold your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when your glory is seen by me." For he who partakes of divine bread always hungers with desire. And he who hungers in this way has a never-failing gift, as Wisdom promises, saying, "The Lord will not slay the righteous soul with famine." He promises too in the Psalms, "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread." We may also hear our Savior saying, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." It is much more satisfying then for the saints and those who love the life that is in Christ when they elevate themselves to a longing after this food. Festal Letter 7.4–6.

### **Kneading His Body with Ours.**

Chrysostom: Those people then at the time of Jesus reaped no fruit from what was said. We, on the other hand, enjoy the benefit in seeing these things truly realized [in the present]. And so, it is necessary to understand the marvel of the mysteries: what they are, why they were given and how they are profitable. We become one body and "members of his flesh and of his bones." Let the initiated follow what I say. In order then that we may become this not only by love, but in action, let us be blended into that flesh. This is effected by the food that he has freely given to us, desiring to show the love that he has for us. This is why he has mixed up himself with us. He has kneaded up his body with ours, so that we might be one distinct entity, like a body joined to a head. For this belongs to those whose love is strong.... This is also what Christ has done in order to lead us into a closer friendship and to show his love for us. He has allowed those who desire him not only to see him but even to touch, and eat him, and fix their teeth in his flesh and to embrace him and satisfy all their love. Let us then return from that table like lions breathing fire, having become terrible to the devil, ruminating on our head and on the love that he has shown for us. Homilies on the Gospel of John 46.3.

### **The Bread of Life Destroys Corruption and Death.**

Cyril of Alexandria: [Jesus] at length reveals himself to the [children of Israel], saying, "I am the bread of life." He does this so that they may now learn that if they want to get rid of the corruption that rules their lives and avoid the death that fell upon us because of sin, then they must draw near and participate in the only one who is strong enough to save them by destroying corruption and death. Commentary on the Gospel of John 4.2.

## **6:49 Manna in the Wilderness**

### **The Advantage of Living Bread.**

Ambrose: It has been proven that the sacraments of the church are more ancient; now realize that they are more powerful. In very fact it is a marvelous thing that God rained manna on the ancestors and they were fed by daily nourishment from heaven. Therefore, it is said, "Humankind has eaten the bread of angels." And yet all those who ate that bread died in the desert, but this food that you receive, this "living bread, which came down from heaven," furnishes the substance of eternal life, and whoever eats this bread "will not die forever," for it is the body of Christ. On the Mysteries 8.47.

## **6:50 The Bread from Heaven Brings Eternal Life**

### **Christ Is the Bread of the Sacrament.**

Ephrem the Syrian: There remained yet another act that would abolish that Passover and would become the Passover of the Gentiles, a source of life until the end. Our Lord Jesus took bread in his hands, plain bread at the beginning, and blessed it, made the sign of the cross over it and sanctified it in the name of the Father and in the name of the Spirit, and he broke and distributed it in morsels to his disciples in his kindness. He called the bread his living body, and he filled it with himself and with his Spirit. He stretched forth his hand and gave them the bread that his right hand had sanctified: "Take, eat, all of you of this bread that my word has sanctified. Do not regard as bread what I have given you now ... eat it, and do not disdain its crumbs. For this bread that I have sanctified is my body. Its least crumb sanctifies thousands of thousands, and it is capable of giving life to all who eat it. Take, eat in faith, doubting not at all that this is my body. And he who eats it in faith eats in it fire and the Spirit. If anyone doubts and eats it, it is plain bread to him. He who believes and eats the bread sanctified in my name, if he is pure, it will keep him pure; if he is a sinner, he will be forgiven. He, however, who despises it or spurns it, he may be sure that he is insulting the Son, who has called the bread his body and truly made it so. Receive of it, eat of it, all of you, and eat in it the Holy Spirit, for it is truly my body, and he who eats it will live forever. This is the heavenly bread that has come down from on high onto the earth. This is the bread that the Israelites ate in the wilderness and did not esteem. The manna that they gathered, which came down to them, was a figure of this spiritual bread that you have now received. Take and eat of it, all of you. In this bread you

are eating my body. It is the true source of forgiveness. Memra for the Fifth Day of Great Week (Holy Thursday), Sermon 4.

### **Worthily Eating of the Body.**

Augustine: But are we, who eat the bread that comes down from heaven, relieved from death? From visible and carnal death, the death of the body, we are not: we shall die, even as they died. But from spiritual death, which their fathers suffered, we are delivered. Moses and ... many who were acceptable to God ate the manna and did not die because they understood that visible food in a spiritual sense, spiritually tasted it and were spiritually filled with it. And we too on this day receive the visible food. But the sacrament is one thing, the virtue of the sacrament another. Many a one receives from the altar and perishes in receiving; eating and drinking his own damnation, as the apostle said. ... To eat the heavenly bread spiritually then is to bring innocence to the altar. Though your sins are daily, at least let them not be deadly. Before you go to the altar, attend to the prayer you repeat, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." If you forgive, you are forgiven: approach confidently; it is bread, not poison.... None then that eat of this bread shall die. Tractates on the Gospel of John 26.11–12.

### **This Bread Is the Forgiveness of Sins.**

Ambrose: I [Jesus] was not speaking previously about temporal life or death. Even if someone dies such a death, if he has taken my bread he will live forever. For he who proves himself, takes it. But he who takes it will not die the death of a sinner because this bread is the forgiveness of sins. On the Patriarchs 9.39.

### **6:51a The Living Bread from Heaven**

#### **The Perfect Bread from Heaven.**

Irenaeus: He might easily have come to us in his immortal glory, but in that case we could never have endured the greatness of the glory. Therefore it happened that he, who was the perfect bread of the Father, offered himself to us as milk, [because we were] like infants. He did this when he appeared as a man, that we, being nourished, as it were, from the breast of his flesh, and having, by such a course of milk-nourishment, become accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God, may be able also to contain in ourselves the Bread of immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father. Against Heresies 4.38.1.

### **A New Spiritual Diet.**

Clement of Alexandria: God elaborates on a suitable and wholesome new diet for the newly-formed and new-born babe. He says it consists of the one who nourishes and who is the Father of all that are generated and regenerated—just as manna, the celestial food of angels, flowed down from heaven on the ancient Hebrews ... But when our kind and loving Father rained down the Word, he himself became spiritual nourishment to the good. This is a truly amazing mystery, because ... this is the kind of diet the Lord administers: he offers his flesh and pours out his blood so that nothing is lacking for his children's growth. This is almost too much to take in! And then we are to throw out the old and carnal corruption, our old diet, receiving in exchange a totally new diet—Christ himself as we ingest him for him to remain hidden there. Then, with our Savior enshrined in our souls, as it were, we can correct the affections of our flesh. Christ the Educator 1.6.

### **Manna Still Rains Down from Heaven.**

Ambrose: You asked me why the Lord God does not now rain down manna as he did on our ancestors' people. If you reflect, you will realize that he does, even daily, rain down manna from heaven on his servants. In fact, a corporeal manna is found today in many places, but it is not now a matter of such great wonder, because what is perfect has come. This is the Bread from heaven, the Body from a virgin, of which the gospel sufficiently tells us. How much more excellent this is than what went before! Those who ate that manna, or bread, are dead, but he who eats this Bread will live forever.... Whoever experiences this downpour of divine Wisdom is delighted, and, needing no other food, lives not on bread alone but on every word of God. Letter 77.

### **As Beggars Before God We Ask for Bread.**

Augustine: You are God's beggar. I mean, we are all God's beggars when we pray. We stand in front of the great householder's gate. In fact we go so far as to prostrate ourselves, we whine and implore, wanting to receive something, and that something is God himself. What does the beggar ask from you? Bread. And you, what do you ask from God, if not Christ, who says, "I am the living bread who came down from heaven"? Sermon 83.2.

### **Many Grains Joined Together.**

Cyprian: The body of the Lord cannot be flour alone or water alone, unless both are united and joined together and compacted in the mass of one bread. In this very sacrament our people are shown to be made one, so that as many grains, collected and ground and mixed together into one mass, make one bread, so also in Christ, who is the heavenly bread, we may know that there is one body with which our number is joined and united. Letter 62.13.

### **6:51b The Bread Jesus Gives Is His Flesh**

#### **The Flesh He Gives Is Life Because It Transforms Our Flesh.**

Cyril of Alexandria: I die (he says) for all, that I may quicken all by myself. And I made my flesh a ransom for the flesh of all. For death shall die in my death, and with me shall rise again (he says) the fallen nature of humankind. This is why I became like you, that is, human and of the seed of Abraham, so that I might be made like in all things to my brothers. ... For there was no other way for the power of death to be destroyed, as well as death itself, unless Christ gave himself for us as a ransom, one for all, for he was in behalf of all....

Christ therefore gave his own body for the life of all, and again through that body he makes life to dwell in us. Now I will try to tell you how. For since the life-giving Word of God indwelt in the flesh, he transformed it into his own proper good, that is, life, and by the unspeakable character of this union, coming wholly together with it, rendered it life-giving as he himself is by nature. Wherefore the body of Christ gives life to all who partake of it. For it expels death when it comes to be in dying people, and [it] removes corruption, perfectly full, in itself, of the Word which abolishes corruption. Commentary on the Gospel of John 4.2.

### **6:52 How Can This Man Give Us His Flesh to Eat?**

#### **Let Faith Confirm You.**

Cyril of Jerusalem: Failing to understand his words spiritually, [the Jews] were offended and drew back, thinking that the Savior was urging them to cannibalism. Then again in the old covenant there was the showbread. But that, since it belonged to the old covenant, has come to an end. In the new covenant

there are the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation, which sanctify body and soul. For as bread corresponds to the body, so the Word is appropriate to the soul. So do not think of them as mere bread and wine. In accordance with the Lord's declaration, they are body and blood. And if our senses suggests otherwise, let faith confirm you. Do not judge the issue on the basis of taste, but on the basis of faith be assured beyond all doubt that you have been allowed to receive the body and blood of Christ. Mystagogical Lectures 4.4–6.

## **6:53 No Life Without the Flesh and Blood of the Son of Man**

### **The Medicine of Immortality.**

Ignatius of Antioch: Come together in common one and all without exception in charity, in one faith and in one Jesus Christ, who is of the race of David according to the flesh, the Son of man and Son of God ... and break one bread, which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death, enabling us to live forever in Jesus Christ. Epistle to the Ephesians 20.

### **The Mystery Is Revealed to Those Who Believe.**

Cyril of Alexandria: How he will give them his flesh to eat he does not yet tell them, for he knew they were in darkness and would never in that state be able to understand what is ineffable.... But the power of learning suitably follows on those who believe.... It was therefore right that faith should first be rooted in them before understanding.... And it is for this reason (I suppose) that the Lord refrained from telling them how he would give them his flesh to eat, calling them to believe before they seek. For those who believed, however, he broke bread and gave it to them, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body." ... Do you see how he does not explain the mystery to those who had senselessly rejected the faith without investigation? But, to those who believe, he declares it most clearly. Commentary on the Gospel of John 4.2.

## **6:54 Jesus' Flesh and Blood Are for Eternal Life**

### **The Enfleshed Word Is Life.**

Cyril of Alexandria: Whoever eats the holy flesh of Christ has eternal life because his flesh has the Word which by nature is life. Commentary on the Gospel of John 4.2.

### **Within the One Who Partakes.**

Philoxenus of Mabbug: Now, in as much as a sinner receives our Lord's body and blood in faith, he is in our Lord, and our Lord is in him, as our Lord himself says. Where the Lord dwells, there is his Spirit too. On the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

### **Earthly and Heavenly Bread.**

Irenaeus: For we offer to him his own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread that is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly, so also our bodies when they receive the Eucharist are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity. Against Heresies 4.18.5.

### **6:55 True Food and Drink**

#### **Real Eating.**

Chrysostom: Either he means to say that the true food was he who saved the soul. Or, he means to assure them that what he had said was no mere enigma or parable but that you must really eat the body of Christ. Homilies on the Gospel of John 47.1.

#### **Real Satisfaction.**

Augustine: Or think of it this way: Whereas people desire meat and drink to satisfy hunger and thirst, real satisfaction is produced only by that meat and drink that make the receivers of it immortal and incorruptible. He's talking here about the fellowship of the saints where there is peace and unity, full and perfect. Therefore ... our Lord has chosen for the types of his body and blood things that become one out of many. Bread is a quantity of grains united into one mass, wine a quantity of grapes squeezed together. Then he explains what it is to eat his body and drink his blood: "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him." So then to partake of that meat and that drink is to dwell in Christ and Christ in you. Whoever does not dwell in Christ, and in whom Christ does not dwell, neither eats his flesh nor drinks his blood; rather, he eats and drinks the sacrament of it to his own damnation. Tractates on the Gospel of John 26.17–18.

## **We Are One, Because the Father Is in Christ and Christ in Us.**

Hilary of Poitiers: If in truth the Word has been made flesh and we in very truth receive the Word made flesh as food from the Lord, are we not bound to believe that he abides in us naturally? [Jesus], born as a man, has assumed the nature of our flesh now inseparable from himself and has joined together the nature of his own flesh to the nature of the eternal Godhead in the sacrament by which his flesh is communicated to us. For in this way we are all one because the Father is in Christ and Christ is in us.... And so, if indeed Christ has taken to himself the flesh of our body, and that man who was born from Mary was indeed Christ, and we indeed receive in a mystery the flesh of his body—and because of this we shall be one, because the Father is in him and he in us—how can a unity of will be maintained, seeing that the special property of nature received through the sacrament is the sacrament of a perfect unity?...

As to what we say concerning the reality of Christ's nature within us, unless we have been taught by him our words are foolish and impious. For he says himself, "My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them." As to the verity of the flesh and blood there is no room left for doubt. For now, both from the declaration of the Lord himself and our own faith, it is truly flesh and truly blood. And these when eaten and drunk enable both that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Is this not true? Yet those who affirm that Christ Jesus is not truly God are welcome to find it false. He therefore himself is in us through the flesh and we are in him, while together with him our own selves are in God. On the Trinity 8.13–14.

## **6:56 Jesus' Flesh and Blood Unite Us**

### **One with Christ.**

Cyril of Alexandria: If one joins two pieces of wax, one will see that one has become part of the other. In a similar manner, I suppose, the person who receives the flesh of our Savior Christ and drinks his precious blood ... shall be one with him. Commentary on the Gospel of John 4.2.

### **Eat and Drink of the One Who Is Life.**

Cyril of Alexandria: O sublime condescension! The Creator gives himself to his creatures for their delight. Life bestows itself on mortals as food and drink. "Come, eat my body," he exhorts us, "and drink the wine I have mingled for you. I have prepared myself as food. I have mingled myself for those who desire me.



Of my own will I became flesh and have become a partaker of your flesh and blood.... Eat of me as I am life, and live, for this is what I desire.... Eat my bread, for I am the life-giving grain of the wheat, and I am the bread of life. Drink the wine I have mingled for you, for I am the draught of immortality.... I am the true vine; drink my joy, the wine that I have mingled for you. Meditation on the Mystical Supper 10.

### **6:57 The Living Father Sent Christ**

#### **Christ Is the Living Image of the Living.**

Hilary of Poitiers: Can lifeless copies be put on a level with their living originals? Can painted or carved or molten effigies be put on a level with the nature that they imitate? The Son is not the image of the Father after such a fashion as this; he is the living image of the Living. The Son who is born of the Father has a nature in no way different from his. And, because his nature is not different, he possesses the power of the nature that is the same as his own. The fact that he is the image proves that God the Father is the author of the birth of the Only Begotten, who is himself revealed as the likeness and image of the invisible God. And hence the likeness, which is joined in union with the divine nature, is indelibly his own because the powers of that nature are inalienably his own. On the Trinity 7.37.

#### **The Shared Being of the Father and the Son.**

Gregory of Nazianzus: All things that the Father has are the Son's. On the other hand, all that belongs to the Son is the Father's. Nothing then is unique to either one, because all things are in common. For their being [essence] itself is common and equal, even though the Son receives it from the Father. It is in this respect ... that it is said, "I live by the Father," not as though his life and being were kept together by the Father but because he has his being from him beyond all time and beyond all cause. On the Son, Theological 4(30).11.

#### **To Eat Christ?**

Augustine: The Lord and master was inviting his slaves, and the food he had prepared for them was himself. Who would ever dare to eat his own Lord and master? And yet he said, "Whoever eats me lives because of me." When Christ is eaten, life is eaten. Nor is he killed in order to be eaten, but he brings life to the dead. When he is eaten, he nourishes without diminishing. So do not be afraid, brothers and sisters,

of eating this bread, in case we should possibly finish it and find nothing to eat later on. Let Christ be eaten; when eaten he lives because when slain he rose again. Sermon 132a.1.

### **Christ Has the Father Within Himself.**

Hilary of Poitiers: So then he lives through the Father, and just as he lives through the Father we live through his flesh. For all comparison is chosen to shape our understanding so that we may grasp the subject we are treating with the help of the analogy set before us. Christ dwelling within our carnal selves through the flesh is the reason we have life, and we shall live through him in the same way as he lives through the Father. If, then, we live naturally through him according to the flesh, that is, if we have partaken of the nature of his flesh, must not Christ naturally have the Father within himself according to the Spirit since he himself lives through the Father? And he lives through the Father because his birth has not implanted in him an alien and different nature. This is because his very being is from the Father yet is not divided from the Father by any barrier of an unlikeness of nature because within himself he has the Father through the birth in the power of the nature. On the Trinity 8.16.

### **Not Only Life, but Eternal Life.**

Chrysostom: The “life” of which he speaks here is not merely life but the excellent life. For it is clear from this that he spoke not simply of life but of that glorious and ineffable life. For everyone lives, even unbelievers and the uninitiated who do not eat of that flesh.... And he is not speaking of the general resurrection either (for all alike rise again), but he is speaking of that special, glorious resurrection that has a reward. Homilies on the Gospel of John 47.1.

### **6:58–59 Eat This Bread and Live Forever**

#### **Length of Life versus Life Without End.**

Chrysostom: If it was possible without harvest or fruit of the earth, or any such thing, to preserve the lives of the Israelites of old for forty years, much more will he be able to do this, having come for a greater purpose.... He knew how precious a thing life was in people’s eyes, and therefore he repeats his promise of life often, just as the Old Testament had done. But the Old Testament only offered long life, whereas he offers life without end. This promise was an abolition of that sentence of death that sin had brought on us.... He said these things in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum, where many displays of his

power took place.... He taught in the synagogue and in the temple, with the intention of attracting the multitude and as a sign that he was not acting in opposition to the Father. Homilies on the Gospel of John 47.1–2.

### **The Heavenly Bread of Immortality.**

Romanus Melodus:

All the angels on high marvel at the affairs of earth

For earth-born men dwelling here below

Are exalted in spirit and reach what is on high

As they share in Christ, crucified.

For all together partake of His body,

As they eagerly come to the bread of life,

They hope for eternal salvation from it.

Even though visibly, to all appearances, it is bread

It sanctifies them spiritually because it is

The heavenly bread of immortality.

That the bread which we take is the flesh of the Immanuel,

The Master Himself was the first to teach us;

For when He voluntarily went to His Passion,

Christ broke the bread of salvation,

And said to His apostles, as it is written:

“Now draw near; eat of this,

And eating, you will receive eternal life,

For this is my flesh, this food,

Since really, I whom you behold, am

The heavenly bread of immortality.

We all know, we who possess complete faith in Christ,

That as we approach, eager for the mystic bread

And in addition take the cup of salvation,

If we are of pure heart and without dissimulation

We are all participants of the flesh and blood

Of Christ with faith in Him, and we hope

From this a life like that of the angels;

For, in very truth, the body of the One who suffered,

The very holy body of Jesus Christ is

The heavenly bread of immortality.

Kontakion on the Multiplication of Loaves 13.1–3.