



Chapter 3

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35

In spite of all of my fears, the Lord was gently wooing me to step out of my comfort zone once again. I was being invited into a great unknown that I had been cautioned against my entire life, even though the teaching was as old as the Church itself. In order to be transformed to more resemble Him, I had to trust that He knew what He was doing even if I did not. There, He enabled me to leave myself behind so He could embrace me all the more...

Doors Unlocked

So there I stood, outside of the Adoration Chapel door. I had come a long way since my profound encounter with God in the canyon. Watching others hold the Eucharist in such high esteem and realizing I could experience Him in a physical way, differently than I could in prayer or through His sacred Word or through other people, had made me long to be in a congregation of like-minded worshipers who were more “sacramental” than we were in the Presbyterian church.

By now I had been a Baptist, availing myself not of sacraments, but of ordinances, which are seen as symbols performed out of obedience to the Lord’s command to “remember Him.” Next, we had become Bible Church goers (very similar to Baptists in their strong Biblical beliefs, but with a more contemporary “praise and worship” atmosphere), and then Presbyterians. As Presbyterians, we were more formal in our liturgy, but did not believe that the Host is the True Body and Blood of Jesus. And now, here I stood, a very happy and contented Anglican, who was quite sacramental, standing outside of an Adoration Chapel at a Catholic Church! God had

been wooing me all along and I had, by His grace, inched my way ever closer theologically to Catholicism. But was I able to jump over that last hurdle to embrace what I believed to be true? Could I concede that perhaps there was still a great deal more to learn about God's desire to unite with me--and that His plan included the Eucharist? To accept this, I would have to admit that the theology I lived by, and had for many years taught others to believe as well, was incomplete. If I had been missing something, would I have the courage to rethink it all? Could I do that?

I stood on a precipice and I knew it. God had not asked me to jump from the canyon wall in Texas, but He was now asking me to take a leap of faith and to trust Him to catch me. But would I? Had the lock in my heart been tumbled enough to allow passage?

I had dashed past the chapel so many times before with one eye closed, as I did not want my "eyes to cause me to sin" (Matthew 5:29) by looking at something I deemed to be offensive to God. In spite of what God had shown me in the canyon those years before, old habits die hard, and my brain and spirit could not keep from remembering what it had known since childhood. Somewhere deep inside of me I kept hearing "Beware!" The Adoration Chapel represented idol worship to me and I wanted NO PART of idolatry! So day after day, as I took my little ones to school, grabbing their tiny, trusting hands, we would pass by—no, rush past at breakneck speed—to get beyond the Adoration Chapel as fast as possible.

Still, I was deeply curious. I wondered, for example, why they kept whatever was behind that door under a code lock, since the other doors to the Church were always open. I had concluded

that the Catholics kept some sort of deep magic in there, shrouded with secrecy and guarded with care. Some days, I imagined all kinds of evils taking place behind that door. And I was very perplexed that I never saw anyone go into the chapel. Very curious, indeed. If the content of the chapel was so precious that it needed to be protected by key code, why was not everyone flocking to it? What on earth was going on in there? Obviously nothing “earthly,” but I had absolutely no idea, and had decided to stay as far away as possible...

Until today.

There I stood! My mind was a battlefield. My heart longed to go in. If the true Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ Himself was behind the door, how could I stay outside? My Lord? My God, in there? And I, outside on the sidewalk? With all of these other passers by... just idly having everyday conversations about groceries and hair appointments, meetings and dog walkers? With Jesus Christ waiting, just behind this door?

I was an anxious, conflicted mess... a tumultuous ball of contradictory reasoning. “Double minded” best summed me up. James 1:6 states, “for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the wind.” Needless to say, I had no peace.

One half of my mind was howling at me, “Don’t go in! How could you? Why are you doing this? Who knows what you will find behind this door? What if they do sacrifices in there? What if you are possessed by an evil spirit when you enter? What if you are seen by one of your Bible study members and this makes her start asking questions you are not ready to answer? You might lead her astray and you know the punishment for that... ‘It would be better for him if a millstone were

put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.’ [Luke 17:2]] And your own little ones! What about them? What would your *mother* think? Worse, what about your grandfather? And your grandmother? And all of your family? What about your husband? He is a vestry member! How could you betray them all? How could you allow one priest to influence you to this degree? Have you lost your mind? You should RUN! No, you should withdraw your children from Catholic school and forget this ever happened! Now! Run and never walk this way again, then everything will be fine and you will be safe and back to ‘normal.’”

My wiser self knew I could not run. Running away because of fear was not an option today. As I stood there shaking, wondering what to do, my sane, still, quiet, reasonable interior voice started to whisper, “Now wait a minute. It’s just a room for prayer! What could be so bad about that? And almost half of the women that go to your Bible study are Catholic! So how could it be so evil? You loved Joannie and now Fr. Michael, Fr. Dave, Monsignor Duffy, Francis MacNutt, and Mother Teresa, and your friends, Linda and Margy and Gino. Are any of them ‘possessed’ or crazy? And didn’t you see for yourself that Fr. Michael, who has been encouraging you to go to Adoration, is on fire for God and completely dedicated to Jesus Christ? He would not lead you astray. If this is what God has in store for you, He will provide a way for your husband and children and all those who know you to understand that you are only doing what He is calling you to do—to walk in obedience, even if you don’t understand it all yourself. And hasn’t this been a good school for all of your children? Do not worry, have faith, and remember what you saw in the canyon. It is all by His grace. Trust in Him.”

The word, “Help!” erupted from my soul, the prayer of a desperate person—the one that God so loves to answer. As I uttered that word, the Lord in His most gracious manner sent an “angel” to my aid. (As the word “angel” means “messenger,” I feel I have many sent to me daily to deliver just the word I need to hear in the moment.) Jen was a beautiful new friend who, through God’s loving providence, was not only a member of my Bible study; she was someone I deeply trusted. She was also a relatively recent convert to Catholicism. She “just happened” to walk up to me in the middle of my manic deliberations.

With her kind words she first provided the access code to the door. All of the Church members had it. But she did more than grant access to the physical door. She was able to bolster my spirit with the words of reassurance that I needed to hear to help unlock my interior door. Jen assured me that there was nothing horrible inside! There was only a beautiful golden box with small rounded doors that I would need to open in order to view the Blessed Host. She was late for a meeting at work so she had to walk on, but her loving and kind words gave me the confidence I needed to be able to utter the next prayer outside that door.

“Here I am Lord, Your girl. And I am seeking You once again, hopefully with a pure heart and pure intentions. You know that I want to know You more and love You better. If what I am about to do will offend You in ANY WAY, I want to apologize before I do it, and I ask that You will forgive me because I am going in trusting what I believe to be signs from You and people You have placed upon my path to guide me. If You could be so gracious as to allow me to know

that if this is REALLY YOU in there, that You would please make it perfectly clear, right away, as I would like to not miss You a single day in this way for the rest of my life. And if it's not true, so be it.”

With that, I took a very deep breath and pressed the numbers that would change my heart, my mind, and the course of my journey to eternity.

I was in. It was dark. Only a candle flickered on the altar next to the tabernacle. Much to my amazement, it was so peaceful. It felt so holy, not scary at all. The walls were beige and there was a crimson red velvet curtain hanging on the wall behind the tabernacle that set it off as the focal point of the room. I bent down and looked at the beautiful dark, square, wooden box. It reminded me of my Old Testament studies where I learned that the Jewish temple in Jerusalem contained the presence of God in the place called the Holy of Holies—a cube, made of wood overlaid with gold. This Holy of Holies had an ornate, highly polished golden square front façade, and in the center of it was a pair of circular golden doors, cut right down the middle, with small handles to open and see what was inside. These little doors, in a funny way, brought back memories of sugar Easter eggs I used to have as a child. I would peek into them and wonder at the surprise inside which symbolized new life in Christ, rebirth and resurrection joy. The little doors of the tabernacle were surrounded by an elaborately embossed golden “necklace” with four inlaid crimson rubies that could be seen even when the doors were opened, to remind us that it is by His wounds on the cross that we have access to Him now. Around the necklace were eight “rays” of silver, each containing a sculpted sheath of wheat. And in between those, lay sixteen

smaller silver rays, two between each larger ray of wheat, resembling sharp, piercing nails. It was very beautiful.

I felt a bit awkward opening the little doors. I was not sure if someone who actually knew what they were doing might walk in and catch me doing something wrong. But here I was and I was going to finish what I had started. I once again said a prayer and opened the two little doors.

There He was. Refined and Holy. There was a cross etched on the Blessed Host and I noticed that it was not directly straight up and down and I wondered why. Then I thought, “Well, if man has anything to do with this...it will never be ‘perfectly displayed’... ‘all by His grace.’” There I stood with a thousand questions, doubts and fears racing through my mind. Four kneelers were placed in front of the tabernacle so I decided to kneel down using one toward the side. There was a cross cut out of the kneeler in front of me and so I sat back and decided to look through the cut-out of the cross to see if I could view the tabernacle, and I could. I realized then that it is only when looking through the lens of the cross that we can see clearly all that God has done for us.

I then prayed the boldest prayer I had ever prayed, and that says a great deal, considering what I had asked up until now. I said, “Okay, here I am. You got me here. If You are really here, please show me now. It’s now or never, God. Please let me know if you are really physically here.”

I waited. Nothing. I waited a bit longer... and then He acted.

A floodgate of His love burst open, pouring out from the tabernacle, overwhelming me like nothing I had ever experienced. Peace, Light, Joy, and LOVE! I was flooded by Love. I was

floating in Love and on Love and under Love and breathing Love and Love was in me and I was in LOVE! It was fantastic! It was so joyful! It was so freeing! It was physical and spiritual and mental and emotional. I was swimming in Him and He in me. It was an ocean of Light and it was spectacular! It quieted all of my fears and doubts and questions, as “Perfect Love casts out all fear.”[1 John 4:18] It was *HIM!* There was no doubt it was Jesus. The experience of Love lasted for quite some time and it was all I needed to know. It was “Complete.” It was “Shalom” in the truest sense of the word, absolute Wholeness. All I could do was say, “I am so sorry, Lord! I have judged rashly about things I did not understand. Please forgive me and thank You for revealing Yourself to me in this way, now.”

I heard a voice in my inner spirit and it said, “Don’t be so quick to judge, Missy!” (Missy is what my dad called me when I was a child.) But there was no condemnation in the voice. It was a voice of love, and it even sounded as if He were smiling, because I had been made aware of my shortcomings even before He spoke.

All I could do was weep. I wept and wept and wept. I wept out of sorrow and out of joy. I wept and wept and wept some more. I had been dismissive and even ridiculed others’ beliefs about things that were sacred to them—things about which I had no idea. I had lacked a “teachable spirit” and instead was almost arrogant in my beliefs. I wept bitter tears of remorse for having been so puffed up and prideful. And then I wept for joy! I felt the Lord’s loving hand comfort me. I was overwhelmed by all I had just realized about HIM and me. Something in the deepest

part of me was touched, released and transformed. An inner healing was taking place that I did not even know I needed. I was healed and there was peace, perfect peace.

It would take a long while to sort it all out, but I did know this—I had some apologies to make and I needed to start immediately! As soon as I got home, I began to call those whose beliefs I had dismissed to tell them how sorry I was. My friends were befuddled but listened attentively, saying... “I don’t really know what you are talking about, but okay, you are forgiven! No worries!” It felt so good! I was beginning to feel freer and freer with each apology. God was liberating me from myself, little by little. There was progress—I felt it, yes, but I still had a long way to go. Our Lord was by no means finished with me yet.

Praise: Lord, You are gentle and all knowing. You long for me to know You as You really are and You prepared my heart to receive the truth of You years before I was able to understand and accept it. I praise You God, for revealing to me that You are in the Eucharist.

Prayer: Thank you for revealing Yourself so plainly to me in the Eucharist. When I have doubts, or feel judgemental or unloving, please replace these thoughts with faith in You and Your Word. Let me not rely on my emotions or even my own faulty reasoning, but on You and Your Word and Truth.

Promise: “Therefore, if you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your sons, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?” Matthew

Proof of the Promise: I have learned that we should not be dismissive and judgmental of other's sacred beliefs. We are to respect what others deem to be holy. We should pray for an open and teachable spirit and courage to trust in Him because He will never give His children snakes when we ask for Bread.

Ponder: Journal here about *your* personal understanding of the Eucharist? After you're finished, see appendix 1 for some inspiration.