

**You Satisfy the Hungry Heart**  
Rev. Nicole Farley  
First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha  
August 12, 2012

**John 6:35, 41-51**

<sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>41</sup>Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup>They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” <sup>43</sup>Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. <sup>46</sup>Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

**1 Corinthians 10:1-17**

<sup>1</sup>I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup>and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup>and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup>Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup>Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.” <sup>8</sup>We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup>We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. <sup>10</sup>And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup>These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. <sup>12</sup>So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. <sup>13</sup>No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. <sup>15</sup>I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup>The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup>Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

It’s not often we hear a hymn’s origin as part of a hymn-writing contest but that is indeed the beginning of today’s hymn, *You Satisfy the Hungry Heart*. The author, Omer Westendorf, is “generally acknowledged as the person most responsible for introducing ecumenical hymnody to the American

Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>1</sup> Before World War II, Westendorf was the choir director and organist at St. Bonaventure Church in Fairmount, OH. At that time, the choir “used traditional music and Latin lyrics.”<sup>2</sup> “A chance meeting with a choir member (Mr. Aerts) from...Holland, during World War II, changed Westendorf’s life and the music life of American Roman Catholics forever. Aerts introduced Westendorf to the music of the Mass by the Dutch composers Nieland and Andriessen. After the war Westendorf sent for catalogs and samples of the Mass from many European countries. He founded World Library of Sacred Music as the American distributor of these European music firms. In 1955 his company produced the first Roman Catholic hymnal in the United States, *The People’s Hymnal*. It contained eighty-five hymns. In the nine years between 1955 and 1964 he published five different hymnals. Using the pseudonyms J. Clifford Evers, Mark Evans, and the People’s Hymnal Committee, Westendorf included his own hymns. After Vatican Council II his hymnals were in greater demand, and the *People’s Mass Book* (1964) sold over two million copies. He changed the name of the company to World Library Publications and added choral and organ music to the company’s output.”<sup>3</sup>

Before I take you back to that contest I mentioned, it’s time for an ecumenical language lesson. “In the Roman Catholic Church, a Eucharistic Congress is a gathering of clergy, religious, and laity to bear witness to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.”<sup>4</sup> Now, for those of you wondering what “Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist” means, I’ll get to that. For now, all you need to know is that these Eucharistic Congresses are regular events in the Catholic Church, both nationally and internationally. The International Congress of 1976 occurred in Philadelphia and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, as the hosting Archdiocese, sponsored...you guessed it...a hymn-writing competition. “The winning entry was the eminently popular, *Gift of Finest Wheat*, with music by Robert Kreutz [tune name: *Bicentennial*] and words by Omer Westendorf.”<sup>5</sup> The tune name was later changed to *Finest Wheat* and the title to *You Satisfy the Hungry Heart*.

Robert Kreutz’s background was also with a church choir. He served as a parish choir director at St. Bernadette Church in Colorado for more than thirty years.<sup>6</sup> There is not much documented on how Kreutz and Westendorf chose to collaborate with one another on the hymn but it seems likely that their paths crossed as church musicians in the Catholic Church. Their shared Catholic background clearly

---

<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterian Hymnal Companion (Westminster John Knox Press) p. 185;  
<http://books.google.com/books?id=kde8yd0INHsC&pg=PA185&lpg=PA185&dq=%22omer+westendorf%22&source=bl&ots=MjxsyparMh&sig=LWScWAtNktNM9xfT4G6jP4C2EA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=gEIIUPvxK6-WyAGHnYGwCA&ved=0CE0Q6AEwBjgU#v=onepage&q=%22omer%20westendorf%22&f=false>

<sup>2</sup> Obituary of Omer Westendorf; <http://boards.ancestry.com/surnames.westendorf/59/mb.ashx>

<sup>3</sup> The Presbyterian Hymnal Companion (Westminster John Knox Press) pp. 185-6.

<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharistic\\_Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharistic_Congress)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.canticanova.com/articles/liturgy/art9x2.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://liturgicalleaders.blogspot.com/2008/11/robert-kreutz.html>

informed their hymn-writing and is made particularly obvious in Westendorf's third and fourth verses. Before we get ahead of ourselves, though, let's look at the song from the beginning.

We begin with, and return to, the refrain, whose origins we find in our reading from the sixth chapter of John. "You satisfy the hungry heart / With gift of finest wheat. / Come give to us, O saving Lord, / The bread of life to eat." In John, Jesus says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." Both John and the refrain make strong theological statements. In the refrain, the finest wheat is symbolic of the best nourishment our hearts, not our bodies, can receive - hearts hungry for truth and justice and hope.

Now as someone who strongly disliked poetic analysis in high school, I feel it's my duty to save you potential guesswork and spell out to you the Christian, particularly the Reformed, understanding of these verses and this hymn. In John, we know that Christ is not really bread that came down from heaven but a man. The early church was once accused of being cannibalistic because of an outsider's mistaken understanding of this verse and the verse that we use on communion Sundays: this is my body - take, eat. In John, we read, "Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." For starters, we do not believe we will truly live forever but, instead, have eternal life. And we gain this eternal life not by eating bread, or flesh, but by taking in Christ, by allowing Christ to dwell within us, by opening ourselves to Christ, and, we hope, following him as a guide day-to-day through the teachings he has taught us. If we eat this bread, the life and teachings of Christ, we are saved, and the one who gave us this bread is the Savior, Christ.

Verses one and two are fairly ecumenical. As an aside, when I entered seminary, and for a while after, I wasn't sure the difference between ecumenical and interfaith so, should any of you be in the same boat, ecumenical refers to anything that is shared between Christian churches - it could be a doctrine or a worship service. When we use "interfaith," it typically refers to anything that is shared between Christians and other faiths - prayer services for the Sikh community have been interfaith. A service with only Jews and Muslims would also be considered interfaith. In this case, the first verses of the hymn are ecumenical; the doctrine is shared among Christians. We, and all other Christians, understand the common references to Christ as shepherd and we his sheep. We are all grateful that, although we rarely, if ever, live up to our potentials as ones created in God's image, we are always welcomed at the table, that we are offered eternal life just as we are.

And then, we come to verses three and four. Verse three is almost directly from our reading from 1 Corinthians 10. "Is not the cup we bless and share / The blood of Christ outpoured? / Do not one cup, one loaf, declare / Our oneness in the Lord?" And verse four continues, "The mystery of your presence,

Lord, / No mortal tongue can tell: / Whom all the world cannot contain / Comes in our hearts to dwell.” This hymn is absolutely appropriate for us, in the Reformed tradition to sing - there’s nothing heretical about it. But there are, if one wishes to read them this way, references to the Roman Catholic understanding of what happens in communion. Do you have your thinking caps on? This is where I’ll explain that “Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.”

Catholics believe in transubstantiation. “Transubstantiation is the teaching that during the Mass, at the consecration in the Lord’s Supper, the elements of the Eucharist, bread and wine, are transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus and that they are no longer bread and wine, but only retain their appearance of bread and wine. The ‘Real Presence’ is the term referring to Christ’s actual presence in the elements of the bread and the wine that have been transubstantiated.”<sup>7</sup> The mystery which Westendorf speaks of is the mystery of the how of the transformation of ordinary bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood. This transformation, this transubstantiation, is not the Reformed understanding of Christ in relation to communion.

Nor is consubstantiation, an understanding attributed to Lutherans but not held by most Lutherans. Consubstantiation “holds that during the sacrament the fundamental *substance* of the body and blood of Christ are present *alongside* the substance of the bread and wine, which remain present.”<sup>8</sup> Lutherans, by and large, instead agree with Luther’s original teaching that “the body and blood of Christ are present ‘in, with, and under the forms’ of bread and wine”<sup>9</sup> but they agree to disagree on exactly what this means.

And us, particularly us as Presbyterians, what do we believe? We also affirm the real presence of Christ in communion YET we do not believe “that the elements of bread and wine are physically transformed into Christ’s body and blood, but that Christ is really *spiritually* present (by the power of the Holy Spirit) whenever the church (the body of Christ) celebrates this feast in his name.”<sup>10</sup> We use the words “sign” and “symbol” and “seal” to talk about what happens in communion. “Communion is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace made by God through Jesus Christ and extended to us.”<sup>11</sup> The sharing of the elements is symbolic of the sharing we are called to do with our neighbors and strangers alike, symbolic of the great banquet we anticipate when we are all reunited again with Christ, symbolic of our sharing of our gifts, symbolic of our giving thanks to God.

In sharing communion we are giving thanks for the truth of verse five: “You give Yourself to us, O

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://carm.org/transubstantiation>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.theopedia.com/Consubstantiation>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/education/pdf/gods\\_gifts.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/education/pdf/gods_gifts.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Lord.” And, while the amount we consume at communion is not enough for nourishment of our bodies, symbolically we believe that we are more than sufficiently nourished in soul to go out and do the work of the body of Christ. “Then selfless let us be, / To serve each other in Your name / In truth and charity.”

Earlier this week someone saw our church sign and joked with me that I had gotten it wrong because the Bruce Springsteen lyrics are “Everybody’s got a hungry heart.” The more I thought about it the more I realized there’s something fitting about that. The lyrics to *Hungry Heart* include the lines, “Everybody’s got a hungry heart / Everybody needs a place to rest/ Everybody wants to have a home / Ain’t nobody like to be alone.” We all come here with hungry hearts, with the need for rest, with a need for a safe place where we can be ourselves - a home. In worshiping together and, especially, in sharing communion together, when we’ve welcomed Christ in, we do leave here with our hungry hearts satisfied; we have found rest; we have been at home. When we welcome the Spirit in, we find inspiration to respond to what we have received with our own giving; we find inspiration to serve. So may you leave this place, inspired to serve, and so may it be for you and for me.

Let us pray: Giving God, we come wanting and you provide. We come empty and you fill us. We come consumed with our own worries and your Spirit turns us around. Inspire us with a selflessness like that of your Son, that we might go out serving as the body of Christ. Amen.