**The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis**

**BOOK FOUR:** INTERNAL CONSOLATION

**Chapter 14:** The Ardent Longing of Devout Men for the Body of Christ

**Quote:**

“The Disciple

HOW great is the abundance of Your kindness, O Lord, which You have hidden from those who fear You!

When I think how some devout persons come to Your Sacrament with the greatest devotion and love, I am frequently ashamed and confused that I approach Your altar and the table of Holy Communion so coldly and indifferently; that I remain so dry and devoid of heartfelt affection; that I am not completely inflamed in Your presence, O my God, nor so strongly drawn and attracted as many devout persons who, in their great desire for Communion and intense heart love, could not restrain their tears but longed from the depths of their souls and bodies to embrace You, the Fountain of Life. These were able to appease and allay their hunger in no other way than by receiving Your Body with all joy and spiritual eagerness. The faith of these men was true and ardent -- convincing proof of Your sacred presence. They whose hearts burn so ardently within them when Jesus lives with them truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread.

Such affection and devotion, such mighty love and zeal are often far beyond me. Be merciful to me, O sweet, good, kind Jesus, and grant me, Your poor suppliant, sometimes at least to feel in Holy Communion a little of the tenderness of Your love, that my faith may grow stronger, that my hope in Your goodness may increase, and that charity, once perfectly kindled within me by tasting heavenly manna, may never fail. Your mercy can give me the grace I long for and can visit me most graciously with fervor of soul according to Your good pleasure. For although I am not now inflamed with as great desire as those who are singularly devoted to You, yet by Your grace I long for this same great flame, praying and seeking a place among all such ardent lovers that I may be numbered among their holy company.”

**Definition:**

Truly Knowing Jesus in the Breaking of Bread – Personally recognizing and experiencing His presence through communion, which awakens faith and love and a deep sense of His presence among his followers.

**Scripture:**

**Luke 24:13-35**

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven milesfrom Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

**Concept:**

They whose hearts burn so ardently within them when Jesus lives with them truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread.

**Discussion:**

How does the breaking of bread in the Emmaus story serve as a symbol of encountering Jesus in everyday life?

In what ways does participating in the Eucharist equip and encourage believers to live out their faith more actively in daily life?