



With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life

Henri J. M. Nouwen

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One of the most popular of contemporary spiritual writers offers a profound and beautiful reflection on the meaning of the Eucharist for ourselves and our communities. The word "eucharist," Nouwen tells us, originally comes from the Greek for "thanksgiving." And while the ancient source provides one dimension of the Christian experience, Nouwen finds that the wisdom of prior insights no longer suffices in a world changing as rapidly as ours. What we need is to realize the intimate connection between celebrating the Eucharist, and living a "eucharistic life." *With Burning Hearts* seeks a fuller understanding of Eucharist through the story of the disciples on their way to Emmaus from Jerusalem after the crucifixion (Luke 24: 13-35). They did not know they travelled with the risen Christ until they recognized him suddenly in the breaking of the bread. Marveling, they asked one another, "Did our hearts not burn within us while he was talking to us. . .?" Their story models the order of the eucharistic celebration: the coming together in our brokenness before God, the hearing of the Word, the profession of faith, the offering of the meal, and the going forth as Jesus bid them, to renew the face of the Earth. Henri Nouwen shows us how the eucharistic event is intensely human, revealing the deepest of human experience; sadness and loss, attentiveness and invitation, intimacy and engagement. Just as the disciples on the road to Emmaus passed through all these stages so our participation in the Eucharist mirrors each one. Along this five-step journey, the disciples travel, grow, and learn. Their hearts at first are laden with failure and loss, then come to burn with recognition, and finally to burst open with gratitude and new life. This is the "eucharistic" moment: the goal of thanksgiving, of giving thanks to the One who has made us whole. From mourning to discernment, from invitation to intimacy, and finally from community to the charge to go forth and witness: *With B*

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