

Nurturing the bread of life (John 6:51-58)

The church doesn't always value people as God does. Not even Mary.

by [Alma Tinoco Ruiz](#)

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Jesus' words in John 6:51-58 bring us hope. He offers us the heavenly bread we need for eternal life, the bread we need to overcome the struggles and survive the sufferings we might experience in this world. Jesus does not discriminate; he offers this heavenly bread to all for free. "Whoever eats of this bread will live forever," he says.

So valuable are all human beings to God that God sent God's only son to be born in human likeness for their salvation. The church, however, has not always recognized the value that God has bestowed upon all human beings. The church has discriminated against people. It has failed to value all people as what we really are: beloved children of God.

Even Mary, Jesus' mother, has not always been valued as the human being most important, besides Jesus himself, for God's plan of salvation. Mary provided the human material needed for the incarnation of God. She carried in her womb the Son of God, the bread that came down from heaven. She fed and nurtured the Word of God when it was becoming flesh. She gave birth to the Son of God, and she loved him. As Adam Hamilton writes, Mary, the humble servant, also paid a high price for our salvation. What pain could be greater than the pain of seeing your own son tortured and crucified?

We eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, but we have not always valued the humble servant who carried him in her womb and suffered with him for the salvation of our humanity. Who else are we not valuing in our church? The young? The elderly? People with special needs? People with a different sexual orientation? The poor or the sick? People who have made mistakes in their lives and are seeking a second opportunity? We have to remember: Jesus lovingly feeds all people with his own flesh and blood.