

Jesus is abandoned

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This is a difficult moment in Jesus' ministry. He loses some members of his band—maybe a lot of them: ["many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him."](#)

Why? Was it because The Way is harder than they had thought it would be when they signed up? Or because "eternal life" is beginning to look like something other than an endless physical sojourn in a tropical paradise? Is it the puzzling things Jesus has said about his relationship with God? Or is the specter of death looming over it all, and seeming to come closer?

There is a rare plaintive note in Jesus' question to the ones who remain—only 12 of them, apparently. "Do you also wish to go away?" he asks, and waits for an answer. Who is to say that his confidence was not shaken by this considerable defection? After all, we preach that Jesus was fully human and fully divine, and the capacity for self-doubt is one of the most important qualities a person can possess.

I know that the writer of this passage is concerned, as are many Christians, that his Jesus *never* be shaken, never doubt—for Jesus knew from the first which ones did not believe, and which one would betray him. The writer's Jesus must be in control at all times.

But I don't need Jesus to be that way; it's all right with me if he didn't know everything. Jesus' divinity is not impaired by the presence in him of human frailty. That's what the Incarnation is: God becoming flesh, with everything that being flesh entails. Incarnation is not about God becoming some kind of titan who walks the earth unscathed by its sorrows. Jesus is no superman. Besides being truly God, Jesus is truly us.

The meal in which Jesus is "eaten" is a spiritual one. The paradox of the Real Presence is exactly that of the Incarnation: true bread and true body, true God and

true human. Both at once, and each one true. Retaining everything that flesh is, but bursting the limits of it—bread that doesn't rot, bread that never runs out, bread that satisfies forever, bread that is always enough.

In the Eucharist we eat eternal life, practicing the oneness of heaven as we take the body and blood into our bodies. We look to a life in which the constraints and barriers that our physicality imposes on us all fall away.

Homesick cornbread

In large bowl, cream together $\frac{2}{3}$ cup softened butter and 1 cup sugar.

In another bowl, mix 3 eggs and $1\frac{2}{3}$ cup milk.

In yet another bowl, mix $2\frac{1}{3}$ cups flour, 1 cup cornmeal, 3 tsp baking powder and 1 tsp salt. Add to creamed mixture alternately with egg mixture.

Pour into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 400 degrees F for 22-27 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cut into squares; serve warm. 12 servings.