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## Food and Spirituality: Contemplation of God's Love While Eating

DOI: [doi.org/10.26142/stgd-2021-005](https://doi.org/10.26142/stgd-2021-005)

**Abstract:** How are food and spirituality connected? How can food and the time we eat help us to live more integrally in a deeper personal relationship with God and also with ourselves, other people, food and all creation? How can we live Christian spirituality more integrally through food? In this article, the author attempts to answer these and other questions that arise in relation to food. First, he describes his personal experience with food. Then he presents an understanding of food in the light of Scripture and the Eucharist. In the second chapter he shows the importance of prayer before eating and the blessing of food, and what we can do to make the whole time of eating a time of deeper encounter with God and his self-giving love. In the last chapter, he shows a practical exercise of contemplation of God's love while we eat, which can help us to become more and more like God, who also gives himself for us through food.

**Keywords:** food, eating, God's love, contemplation, prayer, spirituality

## Pokarm i duchowość: kontemplacja Bożej miłości podczas jedzenia

**Streszczenie:** Co łączy pokarm i duchowość? W jaki sposób pokarm i czas, w którym go spożywamy, mogą pomóc nam żyć bardziej integralnie, w głębszej, osobistej relacji z Bogiem, a także z nami samymi, innymi ludźmi, pożywieniem i całym stworzeniem? Jak możemy bardziej integralnie żyć duchowością chrześcijańską poprzez jedzenie? W tym artykule autor stara się odpowiedzieć na te i inne pytania, które pojawiają się w związku z pokarmem i jedzeniem. Najpierw opisuje swoje osobiste doświadczenie z pokarmem.

Następnie przedstawia rozumienie pokarmu w świetle Pisma Świętego i Eucharystii. W drugim punkcie artykułu pokazuje, jak ważna jest modlitwa przed jedzeniem i błogosławieństwo pokarmu oraz co można zrobić, aby cały czas jedzenia był czasem głębszego spotkania z Bogiem i Jego ofiarną miłością. W ostatniej części pokazuje praktyczne ćwiczenie kontemplacji Bożej miłości podczas jedzenia, która może pomóc upodobnić się do Boga, dającego się człowiekowi przez pokarm.

Słowa kluczowe: jedzenie, jedzenie, miłość Boża, kontemplacja, modlitwa, duchowość

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

“How can you be so rude to food that you read a newspaper while you eat?” This question from my Jesuits brother surprised me a few years ago and prompted me to think and also to transform my view of food and my relationship with God. Until then, I in the habit that if I were alone while eating, I would read or listen to the radio or watch TV. That didn't seem wrong to me. Only if there were others at the table, then I preferred to talk with them. If I was reading a newspaper at that time, it would have been very rude to the other with whom I was eating, but certainly not rude to the food.

In recent years, I have discovered how often I've missed opportunities to learn about the value and meaning of my life while eating. I was encouraged to look at food in this way by a passage from the Gospel of Mathew in which Jesus tells his disciples: “Look at the birds ... You should learn from the lilies how the Father cares for you.” (Mt 6:26.28) Through this passage, I have experienced how important it is to learn from everything that exists, how God the Father takes care of me and every man, how he strives for us, serves us, gives us, and shows us his gentle and merciful love. Within the mystical relationship with God, man is called to taste his love and mercy and is invited to live and share this experience with others.<sup>2</sup>

So even food can teach me about God's gifting love for me. At the same time, it teaches me how I can become God's gift to others, like the food that is a gift to me. As it is its essence and meaning that food is a gift it is freely given so it is with my essence.

For the past year I have also been addressed by a passage in which Jesus says that the Father “makes his sun un rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on

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<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P6-0269).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M. Pevec Rozman, *Pomen in vloga religije v sodobni postmoderni družbi in iskanje bistva religioznega fenomena [The Meaning and Role of Religion in Postmodern Society and the Question of the Essence of the Religious Phenomenon]*, »Bogoslovni vestnik« 77/2 (2017), p. 298.

the righteous and on the unrighteous.” (Mt 5:44-45) This passage has given me the opportunity to realise how important it is to see how God The Father himself gives this food the opportunity to delight me with its smell, taste, and beauty. He also gives my body the ability to eat food. He gives my body the ability to digest it and so I get the strength to live my everyday life and function in it. So, when I enjoy food, I feel like a disciple learning to be moved by the love of God that allows me to live and work. It also teaches me how the whole point of my life is to live God's love for every human being, a love that is revealed even through food.

I have long wondered why Jesus encourages his hearers to listen and watch so often. Through his life and action, and especially his parables about the Father and his kingdom, he instructed us in his way of listening, watching and understanding God, himself, people, creation and everything that was going on. With his call to listen and watch, however, he encouraged everyone to learn it and live it.<sup>3</sup> Those who live in this way achieve the fullness of life (Jn 10:10).

Spirituality allows us to find the content and meaning of life and answers the deepest questions of life.<sup>4</sup> Walking this path leads us to an integral relationship towards ourselves, towards others and towards creation. Christians achieve this when they enter Jesus' way of listening, watching, and understanding to all things. In this context, the spirituality of discipleship is learning the way of life of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

## 1. Food through the light of the Holy Bible and Eucharist

The Bible does not say much about food, but it makes it clear that it plays a very important role in man's life, in his relationships with others and with God: man cannot live without food, nor can he live on food alone. So God instructs Adam and Eve to eat. At the same time, by forbidding them to eat from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gn 2:9), He tells them, among other things, that they do not live on food alone. They are what they are not because of food, but because of a living relationship with him, trusting in him<sup>6</sup> and living according to the lawfulness of the life he has given them and gives them at every moment.<sup>7</sup>

All human destiny revolves around food. Thus his fall at the beginning: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. Kutarna, *Hierarchy and Likeness—Ways to Union with God in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas*, “Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia” 13 (2020), p. 191-196.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. I. Platovnjak, The understanding of spirituality among Slovene Catholics on the basis of the survey “Sacrifice in Christian spirituality”, »Synthesis philosophica« 35/1 (2020), p. 216-232.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. I. Platovnjak – T. Svetelj, *Anatheism – an incentive to discover the importance of discipleship in Christianity*, »Bogoslovni vestnik« 78/2 (2018), p. 377-385.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. B. Žalec, *Rezilienca, teologalne kreposti in odzivna Cerkev [Resilience, Theological Virtues, and a Responsive Church]*, »Bogoslovni vestnik« 80/2 (2020), p. 272.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. D. Iwański, *Speaking About Biblical Wisdom*, “Collectanea Theologica” 77 (2007), p. 53-58.

to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.” (Gn 3:6). So too is his redemption through Jesus’ life, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection, which is reiterated in the Eucharistic sacrifice of bread and wine (Mt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:23-26). At the end of time, in heaven, there will be the marriage feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:9). One of the fundamental criteria on the Day of Judgment will also be the attitude towards food: “I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink.” (Mt 25:35).

In this way, the concreteness of man’s love for people and for God is revealed in his relationship to food. In this relationship, it is seen whether man loves his neighbor as himself (Mt 22:39; Mk 12:31; Lk 10:27) and puts into practice Jesus’ new commandment “love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12).

Jesus did not ignore the human need for food. When He saw the hunger of the people who listened to Him, He fed them repeatedly with the miraculous multiplication of bread (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-14). He understood the hunger of His disciples and allowed them to eat ears of corn even on the Sabbath, when it was forbidden (Mt 21:1; Mk 2:23; Lk 6:1). He also loved to eat and drink, for which he was condemned: “Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Mt 11:19) He even invited himself to be a guest of the tax collector, Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). After the resurrection, he prepared bread and fish for his disciples and invited them to eat (Jn 21:9-12). When He taught them to pray the Lord’s Prayer, He encouraged them to ask the Father every day, “Give us this day our daily bread.” (Mt 6:11).

In Jesus’ time, bread was a fundamental food and, as it were, represented all the food that a person needs to live.<sup>8</sup> In this way, He showed in a particularly striking way that He was deeply aware of the need of every human being for food (“daily bread”) every day, because without it he cannot live and carry out his mission on earth. And bread is not something to be taken for granted or the fruit of human care and labour alone, but is a gift from the Father. For He gives man the ability to work and to co-create bread with him.<sup>9</sup> He also gives to the soil to be fertile and to the seed of the wheat to grow, so that it can bear fruit and put at the disposal of man, in the preparation of bread. And the bread is not just for him, but is for all people, which is why we pray “our daily bread”.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, Jesus reminded people that man does not live by bread alone. When they sought Him after the multiplication of the bread, He made it clear

<sup>8</sup> Cf. S. Skralovnik, *Otvoritev biblične arheološke razstave Od puščave do mize [Opening of the Biblical Archaeological Exhibition. From Desert to the Table]*, “Edinost in dialog” 73 (2018), p. 280.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. M. Tasca, *Hrana, ki hrani – za zdravo in sveto življenje. Pismo generalnega ministra vsem bratom Reda [Food that Nourishes – for a Healthy and Holy Life. Letter from the Minister General to all the Brothers of the Order]*, Ptuj 2015, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. M. Tasca, *Id.*, p. 18-19.

that they were not seeking Him for the food that gives eternal life, but for the earthly bread, to be satisfied physically (Jn 6:26). He then warned them, "Do not work for food that spoils; instead, work for the food that lasts for eternal life. This is the food which the Son of Man will give you, because God, the Father, has put his mark of approval on him." (Jn 6:27) As a true man himself, He was experientially aware of how the tempter wants to convince everyone that the most important thing is the life here on earth and the bread of the earth, for He himself had been tempted in this way. But He recognized the temptation and firmly rejected it: "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4) He also warned people not to worry about what they would eat or drink, because the Father cares for them (Mt 6:25-34). If they trust in Him and live out His kingdom (v. 33), then they will know experientially how living in the spirit of His kingdom enables each person to have what he or she needs, as the birds of the air (v. 26) and the lilies (v. 28) have.

The human desire or need for food is a gift from God. God created man that way. This need is therefore "legitimate", as Skralovnik points out (2019, 13), "and in itself is by no means sinful, but it must not become the criterion and goal of human life". But man (Israel) is called to a higher goal, as it is written in Deuteronomy 8:3: "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." These needs can therefore lead him into sin, separation from God, when he puts them before doing his will, i.e. living according to his commandments, especially the greatest commandment of love of neighbour (Gal 5:14).<sup>11</sup> In this way, these needs become an obstacle on his way to the fullness of life.

But we should not overlook the extremely important fact that in Hebrew the same root 'wh "expresses not only physical needs, but also the highest human longing – the longing for God."<sup>12</sup>

"My soul yearns ('wh) for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." (Is 26:9).

The use of the same root word is certainly not accidental, but points to an important meeting place between man and God in the reality of life, i.e. at the table. We are thinking here of the table around which people gather in their homes, and of the liturgical "table", the altar. According to Skralovnik, food "plays such an

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate*, Vatican 2018, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html) [10.08.2021], n. 60.

<sup>12</sup> S. Skralovnik, *Pomen hrane v Svetem pismu: "Človek ne živi samo od kruha." (5 Mz 8,3) [Meaning of Food in the Bible: "Man does not Live by Bread Alone" (Dt 8:3)], "Božja beseda danes" 25 [i.e. 26]/1 (2019), p. 13-14.*

important role in the Bible that we can make the following statement: in reality, it was not enough for the God of the Bible to take on the form of a man, He had to transform himself into food, into bread (the Eucharist). It is thus no coincidence that the Jewish Passover constitutes the context where God's work of redemption 'had to' be completed, where the New Covenant was made, i.e. at the table."<sup>13</sup>

In Luke's account of the institution of the Eucharist we read, "Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (Lk 22:17-19). When we do this in the Eucharistic offering in memory of Jesus, we are actually repeating it (the liturgical "today"). Thus, in the celebration of the Eucharist, the past becomes the present at the meal, under the images of bread and wine.<sup>14</sup>

Through the Eucharistic bread and wine, God Himself becomes "food" in Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup> Christ is no longer just with us, but allows Himself to be eaten as food, entering into every pore of our body. But it is not He who changes as food in us, but we change into Him and become more and more like Him, food for others. Eschatologically, what happens with bread and wine during the consecration, foreshows final possibilities and purpose of the whole of creation, to be medium and sign of God's glory.<sup>16</sup> Through this food, in a sacramental way, He lives in every Christian who consumes Him in faith, and he lives in Him. The more we consume Him in faith, the more we increase our taste for Christ and for Him through the Father, the more we are able to know Him, love Him and live with Him and in Him in our lives.

Irena Avsenik Nabergoj points to the aspects of Augustin's use of food metaphors in his *Confessions*. The most important aspect is the use of food metaphors in relation to knowledge and truth. She explains: "Augustine's desire to consume knowledge, the truest knowledge of God, is often directed towards the

<sup>13</sup> S. Skralovnik, *Otvoritev biblične arheološke razstave Od puščave do mize*, p. 279-280. In fact, both covenants were "made with food, the first on the sandy ground of the Sinai mountains, 'they beheld God, they ate and drank' (Exodus 24:11), the second at the table at Jesus' Last Supper" (Ibid.).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Paul VI, *Encyclical Mystierium Fidei*, Vatican 1965, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_03091965\\_mysterium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_03091965_mysterium.html) [08.08.2021], n. 39-40; John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Dies Domini*, Vatican 1998, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1998/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_05071998\\_dies-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini.html) [09.08.2021], n. 43.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. T. Stegu, *Žrtev in pashalna skrivnost ter homilija na Slovenskem [Victim, the Paschal Mystery and Homily in Slovenia]*, »Bogoslovni vestnik« 76/2 (2016), p. 395-400.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. W. Zyzak, *Co mam czynić, aby osiągnąć życie wieczne? Duchowość chrześcijańska na świeckiej drodze życia [What shall man do to gain eternal life? Christian spirituality in the life of lay people]*, Kraków 2008, p. 255.

wrong kind of knowledge, towards a false, material knowledge. The way to maturity in experience of God in its constant striving between lack and fulfillment is a way of graduation from literal eating to understanding eating as a metaphor for receiving true knowledge.”<sup>17</sup>

As a summary of the view of food in the light of Scripture and the Eucharist, we can affirm: “Alongside man’s relationship to food, his relationship to those closest to him, to society, and to the sacred has also developed. It was not only the technique of growing and preparing food that developed alongside eating, but also morality, ethics and theology. It was with food that man experienced his finitude and dependence, as well as his creativity and vocation to the transcendent – to relationship.”<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Prayer before eating and the blessing of a meal

If we always have enough to eat, it can quickly happen that we are no longer aware of what food is all about. As we lose our sense of the preciousness of food, we forget that it nourishes not only the body, but also strengthens and nourishes relationships, enriching and defining us in relation to self, others, creation and God. Food is thus both a physical need and an opportunity for human beings to meet others, to talk, to connect and to become one with them. No community can exist if it does not have a common table and time to eat together. Thus, eating is both a material and a spiritual act. When we eat together, community is created and enlivened.

Whenever Jews sat down to eat, they thanked God for the food and blessed it. Jesus approached food in the same way. Before He ate, He first thanked the Father, as we see at the Last Supper (Mt 15:36). Christians have accepted this attitude towards food. Thus, even today, prayer before and after eating is still more or less present among Christians. Of course, its importance needs to be made known frequently, so that it does not become a mere formality. This prayer is, among other things, a useful “break” from food that is already present but not yet eaten. It is a symbolic way of transcending all greed and gluttony. Prayer connects us to God and to all those at the table. It enables us to be aware of the origin of the food, which is in God and all those who have worked with him to produce and prepare it, and its aims to nourish us materially and to connect us spiritually to each other and to God in his

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<sup>17</sup> I. Avsenik Nabergoj, *Biblične in antropološke podlage Avgustinovih metafor hrane [Biblical and Anthropological Foundations of Augustine's Food Metaphors]*, »Bogoslovni vestnik« 77/2 (2017), p. 405-406; cf. I. Avsenik Nabergoj, *Literarne oblike v Svetem pismu in odmevi v poznejši judovsko-krščanski kulturi [Literary Forms in the Bible and Echoes in Later Judaeo-Christian Culture]*, Ljubljana 2021, p. 456.

<sup>18</sup> S. Skralovnik, *Otvoritev biblične arheološke razstave Od puščave do mize*, p. 281.

goodness: “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God’s word and by prayer.” (1 Tim 4:4-5).

The prayer of blessing before the meal seeks to transform the time and space of the meal into a time of grace (*kairos*) and a space of transformation into new people in Jesus Christ. Tasca articulates this very well:

“If the blessing of food leads us from a purely individual possessive logic of accumulation and consumption, to a logic of sharing and giving, the common meal is first and foremost a place of circulation of the ‘gift’ that occurs alongside the individual gifts. The characteristic feature of the gift is that it circulates more love than objects, more goodness than goods. From this point of view, the common meals are the real and true strategic place of our loving encounters with our brothers. Not obligatory stops to pick up calories before the demanding work of the apostolate, but a time for fraternity at a high level, so that if one cannot build fraternity around food, it becomes very difficult to do so in other moments and circumstances.”<sup>19</sup>

When we talk about prayer before eating and the blessing of a meal, we need to remember how every blessing always contains two moments. The first introduces the awareness that every created reality is a gift from God. All that we have and all that we are is the fruit of God’s benevolent and free love. The contemplation of this immeasurable love of God leads to the second moment of blessing, which is gratitude to God for all that we have received and praise for his unfathomable goodness.<sup>20</sup> The most traditional form of blessing is the sign of the cross, which we make on ourselves, on others or on various objects. We can imagine that the sign of the cross divides into four parts the surface of what we bless, so that we can see what is essential, what is otherwise invisible, i.e. the relationship that the blessed thing has with the source, the Triune God.<sup>21</sup> We live immersed in God. We are invited, like Jacob when he awoke from sleep, to come to the point that whenever we come into contact with the tangible world, including food, we can say, “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!” (Gn 28:16).

How to achieve this? How to come to that deeper awareness that the apostle Paul encourages the Christians in Corinth to “Well, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for God’s glory.” (1 Cor 10:31) Can this be achieved simply by a short prayer before and after eating? The question is, what happens in the relationship between God and us during the meal? How much do we realize that,

<sup>19</sup> M. Tasca, id., p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. Horvat – P. Roszak, *Is Religion Only Utilitarian? Evolutionary Cognitive Science of Religion Through a Thomistic Lens*, “Theology and Science” 18/3 (2020), p. 477-487. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2020.1786222>.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. E. Citterio, *Il “sentimento religioso” nella pratica della direzione spirituale*, w: *L’intelligenza spirituale del sentimento*, ed. B.P. Vřseslavcev et al., Roma 1994, p. 210-220; P. Roszak – B. Seryczyńska, *A Pilgrim Blessing—an Alluring Folklore Expression of Piety? Theological Insights from the Camino de Santiago*, “Bogoslovni vestnik” 80/3 (2020), p. 689-694.



after food and drink, God is given to us by God himself, that we are so enjoyable by God's true love for us, his service to us,<sup>22</sup> so that we can live ever more fully? How much do we realize how He is present in food and drink?

Food and drink are not only symbols of God's love for and attention to us. They are also the realities that God is truly giving us here and now, his immense and free love for us. In the deepest core of food is the imprint of the Trinitarian gifting love between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit,<sup>23</sup> the love through which everything is created and exists in this given moment, that we can receive in a tangible way after eating food and in every Eucharist thanksgiving offering.

Why don't we see that more often? There is probably a reason for our rush. We are often not even fully present in what happens when we eat and drink. Oftentimes we talk or read a newspaper, review messages and news on our smartphone, watch TV, or listen to the radio, etc.

In addition to stopping and consciously deciding that when we sit down to eat, we will be integrally involved in it with all our senses, and with the help of God, with his grace, which is also needed.<sup>24</sup> What really happens in every meal cannot be discovered simply by our thought and behaviour, it must be given to us. Jesus encourages his disciples to ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit time again, for they will be given everything else with him (Lk 11:13) Only with his help can we see and understand all things in Jesus' way, especially those that we take for granted, one of which is often food.

### 3. Exercise of Contemplation of the presence of God and His love while we eat

It is not easy to see how close God is to us or how He is with us through food or drink in every meal. Besides asking the Holy Spirit to remind us of this and teach us Jesus' view of food and drink, it is also necessary to practice. I will present an exercise that can help us to gradually achieve this experience. The exercise of contemplation helps to enter God's presence while eating and drinking. It also helps us enter into this secret of gifting Trinitarian love for every man and all creation, so that in his power we can become men for others, to serve them in the Spirit of Christ (Mk 10:45; Jn 13:12-17).

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ignacij Lojolski, *Duhovne vaje [Spiritual Exercises]*, Ljubljana 1991, n. 235-237.

<sup>23</sup> Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'*, Vatican 2015, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) [11.08.2021], n. 238-240.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. D. Guindulain, *Attracted by God: 49 Spiritual Practices*, Barcelona 2019, <http://www.cristianismejusticia.net/en/attracted-god-49-spiritual-practices> [11.08.2021], p. 12-24.

1) Before a meal. I prepare a meal. I sit down. Before I start eating and drinking, I calm down. I try to raise the awareness of my desire for food and associate it with the desire to be with God the Father and Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

2) Sign of the cross. When I am at peace with my whole being, I also want to enter into the awareness of the presence of God. I will do this by making the sign of the cross. Slowly I will raise my right hand to my forehead, saying 'in the name of the Father'. I will remain in this posture for a few moments to perceive the eternal loving kiss of the Father. Then I move my right hand towards the center of my body, calmly pronouncing "and of the Son", and stop at the breastbone. I surrender to the presence of Jesus Christ in my body. Then I slowly raise my right hand towards my left shoulder and touch it. Calmly pronouncing "and the Holy Spirit", I move my right hand towards my right shoulder, where I rest for a few moments in the touch. I surrender to the presence of the Holy Spirit, who connects and opens me, and ask Him to guide my prayer. I ask Him also to sense the Father's presence and the presence of Jesus and for the gift of being moved because of God's gifting love, which I will receive through food.

3) During meals. I try to be with all respect and all my senses completely to the food and drink. I am looking at what is in front of me and what I can eat and drink. I indulge in the aroma of the food. feeling and tasting it in the mouth. I allow, at the mercy of the Holy Spirit, that the grasp of the Lord's sacrifice over the way God the Father gives this food to feed me and hinge (Mt 5:45). The touching of his concern for me so that I can live (Mt 6:25-34). The touching over his service to me after this food,<sup>25</sup> over the possibility of being able to ingest and digest it so that I can get everything I need for my life and my body will be able to implement what I choose in freedom.

I remain in all that is happening. I am enjoying it with this food that I enjoy, everything I feel about, I am experiencing, it's been made to me. In this way I can deeply encounter the Trinitarian God and receive the taste of his true presence.

4) Conclusion of Contemplation. When I finish the meal, I stop again. I share with the Father or Jesus what was awakened in me: my gratitude, my request. You can also use these words: "God, our Father, thank you for being allowed to consume this food and taste your gifting love. I give myself to you, according to your Son, so that I can give myself to others, as you gave to me after this food that 'died' for me, so that I can live and work. In the power of the Holy Spirit, I, too, become a gift for others, willing to 'die' for them, so that we can live our lives more and more." I conclude by praying Glory to the Father.

5) Reflection of Contemplation. It is about seeing what was going on inside of me. That is how I learn to put different thoughts and senses into my interior.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ignacij Lojolski, id., n. 236.

In this way, I discover how God is present in my life and how he guides me.<sup>26</sup> Note: We can do this exercise with others. Of course, it is necessary for everyone to want to gain a deeper understanding of what is really going on when we eat and how God is actively present in this action. We can read the instructions together first, and then each in our own way, to raise God's gifted love in its own rhythm. One of those involved can also read the "exercises" steps at appropriate intervals. At the end of the service, everyone is invited to say their prayers out loud. They are also invited to share with each other, after a personal reflection, what has been donated to them.

## Conclusion

In this paper it was shown, how God never leaves us and that he wants to be near us through the food and drink we take in with every day's meals. As much as we enter Jesus' looking at and understanding all things, even food and drink, we can more and more experience God's closeness and care for each of us. And the more we are aware of it, the awareness in us rises, how we can be grateful for being gifted with God and his love to us. The more gratefulness there is in us, the more peace and joy.

God is with us and we with him. We ourselves become gift for others as well as He is gift for each of us. Experiencing this giftedness is encouragement for becoming gift – food for others. In this way, we discover the true meaning of food and the meaning of our lives: to be love, or to love in the way that the Father loves us also through food. In this way, eating can also help us to live a more integral Christian spirituality, and find rest in God and be more resilient in different situations of life.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. I. Platovnjak – J. Roblek, *Moliti s telesom, dušo in duhom. Molitveni priročnik [Pray with Body, Soul and Spirit. Prayer Manual]*, Ljubljana 2005, p. 134-135.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. B. Žalec, *Rezilienca, teologalne kreposti in odzivna Cerkev*, p. 272-276.

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