

The Bread of Life

by Bette Ketcham

I used to think I didn't want to be a part of a group. But slowly after several years of pain and self-condemnation (even though I knew union), I began to have revealed in me an understanding that can best be shared in the following analogy.

One day I opened my eyes to find that I had somehow gotten out of the large sack in which I had come. Here I was, a little grain of sugar, separated from all the other little grains, sitting on top of a large kitchen counter. As I became familiar with my surroundings, I saw other grains of sugar all mounded together on top of a piece of waxed paper. Not too far away I saw another mound, not sugar this time but flour. As I focused my eyes I could also see butter, eggs, and warm milk. One small dish had some yeast in the process of being softened. All this seemed so confusing to me. What was I doing here? Who were all these others and what could we possibly have in common?

Out of nowhere came some hands lifting a large mixing bowl, and I began to hear a lot of loud conversation going on among the others with me on the countertop. Some were thrilled and excited that the event was finally beginning. Some said excitedly that we were to die; others said that only a few privileged ones would get to take part in what was to come next. What could all this mean, especially to a small grain of sugar? I decided to try and hide, make myself as invisible as possible so that those hands would not gather me up and place me into that large mixing bowl. I did not want to die, and what would happen to me in that bowl anyway? I would lose my identity; I would become a part of that mixture that would be formed within. I had heard the eggs bragging not ten minutes ago that if the flour and butter wanted to be part of the mixture they'd better get on with trying to correct their imperfections and be transformed into eggs. The mixture had to be one and everyone knows that eggs are important, so all must become eggs. This almost frightened the sweetness out of me. I had to save myself from this fearful process of dying and losing my personal identity. I didn't know how I could become an egg; I had always been a small grain of sugar and I knew to change was an absolute impossibility.

How could I hide? Those hands know where every grain is. Unable to save myself, in a twinkling of an eye this small grain of sugar was lifted high off its resting place, and after a dizzying fall through space, I found myself surrounded by strange beings: bits of yolk, some clumpy, lumpy flour clots, then a delicious feeling of warmth from the milk as it fell from the heated saucepan. How peculiar! All these diverse elements — all in the same bowl. Then to my amazement a large wooden spoon began to mix and stir. I found myself being pushed up against others at a tremendous rate and pressure. All caught up in the apparent chaos of this mixing process, the clots of flour dissolved and the yolks lost their bright yellow color. I seemed to melt into the arms of the warm milk and thought this must be what dying is. The strange thing was that I seemed very much alive. Along with the other ingredients in the bowl I couldn't tell where I began and the next ingredient took over, but yet we retained our uniqueness. The eggs were wrong in their bragging. They needed me to be a small unit of the complete measure of sugar. I needed the melted yeast to aid me in my rising. We all were so vital and important, but none of us yet knew why.

Then came the next part of the process. We had to be taken from the mixing bowl and poured onto a large floured board. There we were pounded and stretched until our original characteristics were lost to those horrified, separated bystanders who had not joined us in the bowl. Now they couldn't tell where I was. All the onlookers could see was the dough we formed

together. Only inside the mixture could we recognize our precious, unique individuality. This pounding and stretching process seemed never to end, but in time those powerful hands let us rest in a warm place covered with a clean cloth. While we were resting, an amazing thing began to take place. We began to rise, to swell, to double in our size. Onlookers said we were arrogant, but we were all too excited to care what they thought, for we could feel this new exciting expansion, this growth.

At long last those strong, loving hands placed us in a pan, and those last moments were terror-filled as we realized the mouth of a heated oven was open to receive us. Onlookers watching, sighed and said, "That's what happens when you sin." I only remember being aware that those with whom I was mixed were now becoming an integral part of me and I of them. At the precise time we heard a bell ring and the door opened.

Now for the first time we saw who we are. We are the bread of life. Unified with Jesus Christ, the Living Bread, we have become a commodity fit to feed a starving world. Now we can enjoy each other's uniqueness, thrill in His mixing process, and marvel at who we have become.