

**ST JAMES'S PICCADILLY
CAMINO COMPANIONS**

**SESSION 5: EUCHARIST
18 & 19 FEBRUARY 2024**

George Herbert, *Love (iii)*

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lack'd anything.

'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here:'
 Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on Thee.'
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 'Who made the eyes but I?'

'Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.'
'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'
 'My dear, then I will serve.'
'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'
 So I did sit and eat.

In the third episode of the *Church Times* Poetry Podcast for Lent in 2023, Mark Oakley reflected on this poem by George Herbert.

(You can access the podcast online through the Church Times website)

"Over my years of reading Herbert, I have come to see him as the poet who most expresses our relationship with God as a friendship. I'm not talking about friendship in terms of the 600 'Friends' we have on Facebook, but rather the one or two people who have changed our life for good and maybe at some cost to us both.

Thinking about these friends can dare us to reflect, as I think did Herbert, that our life with God is a friendship that asks of us a mutual freedom. Friendship deepens as honesty deepens. We cannot put the other on a pedestal. We must try and prize off the mask that has begun to eat into our face. We need to be brave in hearing what we don't like or saying what we have never dared.

Friendship requires courage enough to stop skating so quickly over our own thin ice in case we disappear through the cracks. Instead, we face the fact that we need support and connection and that, also, we have much to give as well."

Sara Miles's book *Take This Bread* includes these ideas about the Eucharist, Jesus and community:

"There's a hunger beyond food that's expressed in food, and that's why feeding is always a kind of miracle.

...I was, as the prophet said, hungering and thirsting for righteousness. I found it at the eternal and material core of Christianity: body, blood, bread, wine, poured out freely, shared by all."