



Some Useful Ruminations on the Picture Book for all Ages,

THE WEIGHT OF A MASS, A Tale of Faith

ISBN's: **English:** 0-940112-09-4 hardcover; -10-8 soft cover; **Spanish:** 0-940112-15-9 hardcover; -17-5 soft cover

- The story and its accompanying illustrations touch on the following sacraments:
Holy Communion, because the Eucharist is the very subject of the text and illustrations.
Holy Orders, in that the baker's son has a vocation to the priesthood.
Matrimony, because the devout Queen desires a sacramental wedding in the Church (regardless of prevailing public opinion.)
Reconciliation, in that the people have taken the first steps toward it: contrition, and a purpose of amendment
- The title is a deliberate pun. Even though the "mass" of the tissue paper has little physical "weight," when it stands for the Holy Sacrifice of the "Mass," its "weight" is incalculable.
- The story is set in a bakery because Jesus is the very Bread of Life.
- The small miracle that occurs on the baker's scales is a metaphor for the larger miracle of Transubstantiation.
- When a decisive event occurs in the story, in the form of the beggar's entering the bakery, the rhythms of the people's lives are disrupted, and they are challenged to conform their human wills to the Divine. Opportunities for sacrifice and for grace arise in the very execution of our daily duties.
- Even though the events are taking place in public, and even though the holy name of God is invoked, the baker openly mocks his son's, the old woman's, and even his deceased wife's tendencies toward the things of God. Anti-Christianity remains an accepted--and even expected--intolerance.
- On one spread, the feather falling from above symbolizes the stewardship of angels.
- The presence of the beggar woman lends itself to discussions of love of neighbor, and can be a conduit into those passages of Scripture that deal with charity: caring for widows, the aging, the poor, the hungry, the dispossessed, the oppressed, etc.
- The fact of the paper's weighing more than all the baker's artful and luscious goods combined is a metaphor for the fact of Jesus' being more delectable than all the material delights of the senses.
- The baker is an indisputably honest man, but he is irreligious. (The penalty for implacability is *more* spiritual blindness: the opulence of his shop, the richness of his wares, his artful skill, and earthly success do not afford him wisdom.) The shoppers, too, are not evil people, but worldly and irreligious souls. Still, their hearts can, and do, become deeply converted, through grace, faith, and reason.
- Throughout the story, whenever the son opposes his father, it is because the baker is urging him toward hurtful actions. We are to be obedient in all things but sin.

-The son's obeying the father's wishes in delivering the wedding cake to the father contains at least three metaphors:

1. It stands for safety in obedience to lawful authority.
2. It demonstrates the son's willingness to sacrifice even that which he judiciously prizes with a proper esteem.
3. It echoes Jesus' placing the Will of His Heavenly Father above the human will.

-It is at the moment when the baker surrenders his prized wedding cake in the service of deciding the authenticity of the miracle that he has his conversion from overvaluing the things of this world.

-It is the son who lifts the paper because it is he who has childlike confidence.

-It is Our Lady's hymn that calls the people to process to Mass because when we follow where she leads, we are brought to safety.

-The sun has set in the kingdom because the hour is late. Conversion is not to be delayed.

-The miracle in the bakery does not remain in the marketplace. It conducts us into the Church, where we encounter the reality of the far greater miracle of The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

-The royal wedding Mass is a metaphor for the Church's being the Bride of Christ, and the Mass' being the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Where once the bakery patrons all "celebrated in diverse ways," they will be united as royal subjects in praise and thanksgiving.

-The front endpapers give the view from the doors of the cathedral, looking in from the street, to Jesus in the tabernacle. The back endpapers give the view from the altar, looking out through open doors toward the world into which we are called to spread the good news of the Gospel, and to carry Our Lord. (In the back endpapers, the bishop would not be wearing his mitre during this moment in the Mass. This only illustrates his high office.)

-In the back endpapers, the fact of the people's kneeling in the side ambulatories during Mass subtly reminds that when we are unprepared for Holy Communion we should not come forward to receive.

-The Latin words on the scales of the back cover read, "Bread of Angels" under the consecrated host which weighs more than the thick loaf of ordinary bread, under which is written, "By Bread Alone."