

# *The Diary of Jesus Christ*

BILL CAIN, SJ

ORBIS  BOOKS  
Maryknoll, New York 10545

# *The Calling*

*JOSHUA – AGE 9*

*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

—Matthew 11:28–30

When I was little—and I mean about nine—I wanted to be a rabbi.

This didn't have much to do with God.

Carpentry looked like a lot of hard work.

The only problem was that our particular rabbi never really seemed happy.

The happiest man in the village seemed to me to be the baker.

He was always cheerful. Always joyous. People were always happy to see him, which was pretty much the opposite of the way they felt about our rabbi.

The baker would carry on his shoulders a big yoke from which hung two sacks filled with breads of all kinds and, even though every household baked its own bread,

people would scrape together their coins to buy his. His bread was exotic. He was Egyptian, and the Egyptians had mastered the art of making bread long before anyone else. But that wasn't the only reason people bought his bread.

He would make the women laugh, even my mother, and she wasn't always easy to get a laugh out of. It would be his way to toss in an extra roll for good customers. My mother would say, "You're trying to get me fat!" And he would say, "There's more of you to love." Old joke and not something my father could get away with, but, coming from Osiris, she would laugh.

We kids would follow him through town and he would shout at us.

"You're like a pack of cats at a fish market!"

But when he took off the yoke at the end of the trip through the village, he would give us the broken pieces of pastry for free. For the pleasure of it.

Ever since, I have associated bread with more than nourishment. Good bread is sheer pleasure.

The only time our baker wasn't welcome was Passover, when bread was a serious subject.

And it wasn't just the bread.

It was that he was Egyptian.

At Passover we looked on him with suspicion.

I thought we were good enough friends to talk about it, so I decided to confront him. I found him, alone and sad, in his shop and I asked, "Osiris, why did you keep us in slavery?"

He said to me, "Do I look five hundred years old that I kept you in slavery?"

And I said, "You know what I mean. Why did your people keep my people in slavery?"

## *The Calling*

He said bitterly, "Go ask your God why he killed our children to set you free. Go ask if that was fair."

We sat in silence.

And I knew I had no future as a rabbi.

I said, "Osiris, I don't think I am a very good Jew. I don't think I believe in a God that could kill children."

And he said, "Joshua, I don't think I'm a very good Egyptian. I don't want to be part of any people that could keep slaves."

Then he said, "But let's not be sad. Passover has passed over. I have bread to sell. Put on the yoke and carry it and let's sell the bread together."

When I put on the yoke, I was shocked at how heavy it was. I asked him how he could be so happy carrying such a heavy yoke. He answered, "Well, it's heavy only at the start. Once you sell the bread, it gets lighter. And the more you give away, the lighter it gets."

He was right.

So we went through the village, laughing and chatting, the burden getting lighter as more bread was sold and given away until there was no burden at all but only laughter.

That's when I knew what I really wanted to be.

A baker.