Kim Power and Carol Hogan use the fitting image of a basket full of loaves of bread to introduce us to the origins and purpose of this anthology. They see each loaf as prepared lovingly and uniquely by its respective author. The papers originated from a seminar on Eucharist in honor of Carol Hogan’s Golden Jubilee celebration with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Overall, the authors seek to enter into conversation with “men’s discourse” in order to reinterpret and re-vision the Eucharist based on the perspectives, thoughts, experiences, and hopes of women (1). The contributors come from a variety of theological specialties, including emphases in bible, gender, liturgy, art, cultural context, pastoral theology, psychology, and ecological theology. Recurring themes in the work include community, embodiment, symbolism, suffering, and justice.

While individual chapters deserve more thorough critical attention, a brief look at each illustrates how the power of this collection arises from the creative variety of the recipes used. After a concise introduction, Carol Hogan tells the story of the transitions in her religious community, focusing on the shifting understandings of their charism, vows, and the Australian context. She narrates how the Second Vatican Council and exposure to emerging feminist theologies led to an increase in individualized living and working situations for the sisters that still maintained communal integrity. Next, Carmel Pilcher re-visions community and sacrifice to offer a Eucharistic theology that activates the worshipping community to lives encouraging peace and justice. Lee Miena Skye uses the notion of racial ontology to engage the suffering and Eucharistic experiences of Australian aboriginal Christian womanist sisters. Elizabeth Dowling and Veronica Lawson explore women’s roles in the Gospel of Mark to pose a Eucharistic theology that is inclusive of all creation, especially women. In a timely piece (given Pope Francis’ recent foot-washing of Muslim women on Holy Thursday), Kathleen Rushton examines the biblical and historical testimony relative to the practice of foot-washing and how women came to be excluded from this practice. Frances Gray challenges a disembodied understanding of transubstantiation and proposes instead a notion of transubstantiation as the transformation of community “through conversion, tolerance and compassion” (27). Claire Renkin highlights the place of women in late-medieval Eucharistic art to reflect on real presence and the senses, paying particular attention to how artists portrayed women as encountering Jesus through the senses. For Kim Power, artistic representations of the Christa, the crucified Christ as a woman, show not only that women act in persona Christi but also that Christ took on and embodied all suffering, including that of women. The final chapter, by Anne Elvey, builds upon the interconnection of all living beings through hospitality and sacrifice to promote living in a Eucharist way, “each one for the other” (203).

Beyond its broad and diverse approaches, the book has much to commend it. The writers critique the tradition and then quickly move on to spend energy creating constructive theological content. They engage a variety of male voices (such as Theilard de Chardin, Chauvet, Zizoulas, and Derrida) and official magisterial teaching without...
falling into the trap of letting these voices continue to define the conversation or control theological development. They are fully aware of their contextual perspectives yet address issues related to the Eucharist that Christian believers seeking full Eucharistic participation encounter in any context. While the authors do not spend too much time explicitly exploring the symbol and role of “the word” in the Eucharist (see the treatment of this theme in Carmel Pilcher’s article), the entire book implicitly becomes an example of women’s use of words to incarnate the body of Christ.

This anthology serves up an abundant breadbasket of original ways of re-imagining and re-symbolizing the Eucharist to change perspectives, expand imaginations, and, most importantly, enable full participation by women in the celebration of the Eucharist. I recommend this book for purchase by theologians of all specialties as it offers an interdisciplinary and inter-specialty approach to the Eucharist. Each loaf deserves to be taken, blessed, broken, and shared so as to nourish the theological conversation and generate further reflection on the Eucharist, “the source and summit of Christian life” (Lumen Gentium, no. 11).