A Plea

--John Ciardi

I said to her tears: “I am fallible and hungry

and refusal is no correction and anger no meal.

Feed me mercies from the first-bread of your heart.

I have invented no part of the error it is

to be human. The least law could jail me

and be upheld; the least theology damn me

And be proved. But when, ever, have I come to you

to be judge? Set me straight to your last breath

and mine, and mine, and feed me what I need-not deserve

--or starve yourself, and starve me, and be right.”