

My Vision

Recently I had an experience I will never forget. I hesitate to share my experience with you. Some may think I'm crazy. Most will think it was just a dream. But it was an event that had an impact that I feel I can't keep to myself. So I share this with you.

I drove along on a city street and parked my car. While sitting in my car, there was a big booming sound. The next thing I remember is standing outside my car. I was greeted by name by a man in a dark uniform. He escorted me to golden doors, which were opened upon my arrival and I was bid "welcome" and told to "come in". Inside the light was so bright that it took a second for my eyes to adjust. I know I had never been there before, but it felt so peaceful and friendly. I was surrounded by some familiar faces and even more unfamiliar faces. Still, I could tell they were all happy to see me. Looking forward, I was able to see faces that I did not recognize, but I just knew them. There were Saints Stephen and Lawrence. Having been a deacon, I just seemed to know them. They were not alone; I recognized in the same way Saints Paul the Apostle and John the Evangelist. What were they doing here on earth?

The walls resounded in music; the people around me were singing joyfully. There were these angelic voices above and behind me. I was surrounded by human voices that sounded like a choir of angels. I knew some of the songs and others I did not, and yet to all the songs, I could join. Joy welled up in my heart, and it came out in song. Those who know me know that I was not gifted with music, but what came out of my mouth surprised me with its beauty.

There was a flurry of movement, and angelic figures moved around. There was a movement through the center of the multitude, as a procession. These angelic figures escorted someone up the center aisle and to the throne in the center space ahead of me. I looked around, and everyone was happy and excited. Then standing before me, I could hear the voice of Christ talk not only to my mind but to my heart. The cloud of witnesses who listened to his message was also moved just as I.

The multitude began to sing the Trisagion hymn, and I was singing it with them in languages. I was pretty sure I didn't know. But singing together, I did. I felt that I had mystically been transported to heaven. It was then I truly understood that I was in heaven.

There I was, an unworthy Sinner standing and singing with joy in my heart in heaven. I was thankful not so much to be in heaven but to be in the presence of God. There He was bodily in front of me. In a way that I cannot describe or explain, He came to me and joined with me to become one with Him, and I shared in His divine life.

It is that experience for which I am grateful. Jesus Christ joined with me and made me a partaker in divinity. How can you say "thanks"? How thankful you are for the gift that I received? The

spirit of God welled up within me, and my voice expressed in song my gratitude. My whole body was filled with joy at being one with Christ.

I cannot describe the joy I had at singing and praying with others to our Lord and God. I felt physically transformed. I felt like I was radiating divine light. Yet there were so many faces that were familiar that I wanted to talk to. When our Lord described heaven, He used the image of a feast with the King. At such a feast, one would have the opportunity to talk with other celebrities. While I was happy and joyful, I wanted to be satisfied and delighted, talking to some of those familiar faces. Before I knew it, I felt blessed and joined the multitude leaving and going out into a garden. I looked up and never saw such a more beautiful blue sky with white clouds.

The grass upon which I stood and walked was green and scented. We were surrounded by flowers. While the crowd was great, no one was crowded, and we all made a very short walk into the most magnificent Hall you have ever seen. The aromas of food were beyond belief. There were Ukrainian, Italian, French, and Chinese aromas in the air, yet you could identify those you liked. And so one of those uniform-type figures escorted me to a seat where I sat in the most comfortable of chairs. Sitting to my right was a man I had never met before, and yet I was pleased to be with him. Our lives had so much in common, yet we were separated in the world by time and distance. Across from me was an old and dear friend that I was so happy to see; he was glad to see me. And to my left was an old army buddy who looked as young as when I first met him. We were so carried away, and as we talked I overlooked the food in front of me. I wasn't hungry, yet I ate, and it was the best meal that I had ever tasted.

But that was not to last. I had to return to my car that was parked in front of the church. Through the eyes of faith in living in the Ukrainian Catholic tradition, I realized the church was heaven on earth and I left my earthly cares behind when I went into the church. In the church, Christ became present in His word and in His body and blood at the Eucharist. Accepting that as a reality, I was moved by the Divine Liturgy. It was a religious crowd that turned a group of people into a faith community, genuinely worshipping God, and I was privileged to join with them. It is the perspective we bring when we go to the liturgy that determines what we experience. With the eyes of faith, you can see heaven on earth. In the reception of the Eucharist, Christ Himself joins with us and shares His divine nature with us, for we have been offered up with Him during the liturgy. The word *Eucharist* means "Thanksgiving". In the Divine Liturgy, we are giving thanks to God for sharing His life with us, showing us the way the truth and the life which will provide us with the eternal life of heaven. We should all be thankful for the opportunity to be at the Divine Liturgy.

Participation at the banquet was an exaggeration. The opportunity to be with good friends in a fellowship hall sharing a meal



is also a heavenly experience. Wow! It was my first time with that community. I made a new friend at the banquet and joined with two old friends. I was grateful

to have that experience. Each time we go to Church, there is so much to be thankful for and give praise back to God. So this Thanksgiving, give thanks to God for

your church, the opportunity to participate in the Divine Liturgy, and for all the blessings you have received.

Fr Jonathan Morse

God With Us
 ✦ ONLINE ✦ presents —
CATECHESIS in the PANDEMIC

ECED member, Fr. Vasyl Chepelskyy representing the Eparchy of Passaic, offers this November reflection.



The Early Church Fathers on the Holy Eucharist

Christ nourishes us with His Body and Blood in the Holy Mystery of the Eucharist, helping us to mature in His image and grow in His likeness (cf. John, 6:51-58, Luke, 22:19-20, Mark, 14:22-25, Matthew, 26:26-29). The Greek word *eucharistia* means “thanksgiving.” There are countless references of the Early Church Fathers to this Sacrament.

“It is called Mystery, because what we believe is not the same as what we see; one thing we see and another we believe. For such is the nature of mysteries.” – *St. John Chrysostom*

“I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire His blood, which is love incorruptible.” – *St. Ignatius of Antioch*

“What seems bread is not bread, though by bread taste; but the Body of Christ. What seems wine is not wine, though the taste will have it so; but the blood of Christ.” – *St. Cyril of Jerusalem*

“In this very Sacrament, our people are shown to be one. Just as many grains, collected and ground and mixed together, make one bread, so in Christ, who is heavenly bread, we may know that there is one body, with which our number is joined and united.” – *St. Cyprian of Carthage*

“In our fragmented lives, the Lord comes to meet us with a loving ‘fragility,’ which is the Eucharist,” says Pope Francis, calling it “the memorial of God’s love.” “The Eucharist encourages us, even on the roughest road, we are not alone; the Lord does not forget us and whenever we turn to him, he restores us with his love,” – states the Holy Father.¹

The Eucharist is the source of Christian life. It is the real presence of Christ, who comes to our hearts and lives and dwells within us each time we receive this Holy Mystery. Eucharist brings wholeness to our fragmented lives, it heals and restores us. It connects us with God in a very intimate and profound way.

In today’s society where we are always in a rush and have so much going on and where it is hard to stop and reflect let us find moments to be thankful to God for His gifts and love for us. Let us especially be thankful to Him for His gift of Himself in this Holy Mystery. May our whole lives become thanksgiving and may God continue to guide us on the way of our lives.

*How do the four Gospel references noted above help us “mature in the image and likeness” of God?
 How can we relate to the quotes of Sts John Chrysostom, Ignatius of Antioch,
 Cyril of Jerusalem and Cyprian of Carthage?
 Do the last two paragraphs Or “My Vision” (on pages 6-7) put the Eucharist into perspective? How?*