

A Glimpse of Heaven

When I was in high school at the Benedictine monastery in BC, the abbot, or the leader of the community would give us catechetical lessons and he would talk about how our experience at the mass was *like* being in a time machine.

Being present at mass was like being in a time machine because we go back in time: when the priest consecrates the bread and wine to become the body and blood of Jesus we are remembering, sharing in the memorial of Jesus' death on the cross. We do not sacrifice Jesus again at every mass but rather, here and now, we celebrate that one sacrifice of Jesus Christ that happened almost 2000 years ago. We are all there at the foot of the cross with Mary, with Jesus in his agony, in his suffering and in his death. This is official Church teaching.

CCC 1367 The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross"

However, not only do we go back in time, we also go forward, we anticipate the heavenly liturgy which we all will be able to share for all eternity. How is this possible?

If we turn to our first reading, we see a magnificent banquet. Now banquets had a very significant symbolism in the Old Testament because they were celebrated after a victory which we see in the Lord of the Rings or even with David after he conquered Jerusalem (1 Chron 12:39). What is unique about this banquet is that it is not any ordinary banquet, but a banquet that points towards the 'end times', a kind of final banquet or an 'eschatological banquet'.

This was a vision from the Prophet Isaiah of a banquet that the Lord will provide on a MOUNTAIN. Notice a few qualities here: there is going to be a ton of WINE, when our text says rich food, it is referring to fats because this banquet was a SACRIFICIAL banquet since the fat of an animal was offered to God. DEATH would be destroyed and the reproach or the SINS of the people will be taken away on a MOUNTAIN.

Hmm...sacrifice, lots of wine, death is gone, sins are taken away, on a mountain...what could this refer to?

If we look to the Gospel, we find someone else sitting on a mountain...Jesus! When people see Jesus healing and providing an abundant banquet on a mountain, it is triggering the prophesy of Isaiah in the minds of his Jewish citizens.

What Jesus is doing is he is indicating that he will fulfill what Isaiah prophesized: he will fulfill it on that MOUNTAIN where the ABUNDANT wine of his BLOOD is poured out for all for the FORGIVENESS of SINS through a SACRIFICE that would destroy DEATH.

Yet Isaiah was speaking about a banquet at the end of time, a banquet in fact which is present now in the heavenly Jerusalem, on that Most Holy Mountain. At this heavenly banquet sin and death are overcome, Jesus is continually offering himself to the Father as a sacrifice and we share in this heavenly liturgy right here, right now.

The one Jesus who offered himself on the Cross made present in the mass is also the same Jesus offering himself for all eternity in heaven and so our time machine goes backwards and forwards.

CCC 1326 Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life

Have you ever wondered what heaven would be like? Here is your chance. If we had the eyes to see we could say with St. John Paul: The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth (*Eucharistia Ecclesia*, 19).

As we approach these heavenly mysteries let us open our hearts and our eyes to see the mystery of faith, to bask in the rays of heaven and to share in that magnificent banquet that awaits us and that we mysteriously participate in here and now.

When you see the Lord sacrificed and lying (on the altar), the priest standing over the sacrifice and praying...do you still think that you are among men and dwell on earth? Don't you rather think that you have all of a sudden, gone over to heaven, and expelling all fleshly thought you look at heavenly realities with a naked soul and a pure mind? O what a great miracle! O the loving kindness of God! (St. John Chrysostom).