

#4: *The heavenly hosts lifting us up* [October 30, 2011]

Sometimes the earthly reality of celebrating the Holy Eucharist can be overwhelmingly clear when, for instance, babies are crying or someone becomes ill or a musical note is missed. We have constant reminders that we celebrate Mass among real people and in real time. Yet, at the same time, we are challenged to look beyond the trappings of earth and enter more deeply into the Mystery of God. Whenever we begin the Eucharistic Prayer, “lifting up our hearts” to give God the thanks that is “right and just,” we participate in the praise of the angels in heaven singing, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts.” We are invited to cast aside the worries and distractions of the earth for the glory and joy of heaven. In the celebration of the Eucharist, we are reminded time and time again that we are no longer merely on earth, but we have entered into the mystery of heaven!

The dialogue that prefaces the Eucharistic Prayer dates back to Saint Hippolytus and his writing, *The Apostolic Tradition*, from the third century. Parts of it are found in the writings of Saint Cyprian in the fourth century and the entire dialogue is handed down in the late fourth century work *Apostolic Constitutions*. Together with the *Sanctus*, when we sing this ancient chant to the thrice-Holy God, we are taking onto our lips words and prayers that have formed the hearts of Christians for centuries, transporting them from the limitations of this earth to the eternal banquet of heaven with all the angels and saints.

