

Vision of Heaven and Hell Pt 5

When the vision ended I woke up soaked with sweat and was so tired I could not move. The watch beside me showed 6 PM. Still under the strong influence of this vision, joy and fear ultimately passed through me. I thanked God for permitting me to see all this. Lying so helplessly and thinking about all I saw in the last six hours, my hands suddenly moved toward my face and I crossed myself. The fatigue nailing me to the bed suddenly disappeared and I rose full of joy. After freshening my appearance, I went to the monastery, Zica, to get the books my angel told me to buy. Except for one handsome monk there was nobody in the monastery. I found out later that he was Father Gerasim.

After I kissed icons and lighted candles, I approached the bookshelf and asked Father Geraism to give me the first four in the row. In addition to these, I bought two more books which I liked, "Orthodox Missionary" and "Saint Sava's Bell", which had the face of the Most Holy Mother of Christ with Jesus Christ on the cover. I was about to leave when the monk asked me most politely where I came from. Fearing that I might reveal my recent experience I answered him rather rudely: "that is not your business!" I turned away and left the church.

The books I bought on the advice of my angel were:

- 1 Orthodox book of prayers.
- 2 Life of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 Reading Book on Apologetics; Conversion on Faith
- 4 Small Canonic: Akafist to the Most Holy Mother of Christ, Canonic to the Angel Protector, Canonic of Remorse.

After my return to the health spas, I examined the books and read completely the prayer book and the small canonic that evening. The following day was a big holiday; Saint Peter's day. I went to the monastery Zica for my first prayer, following eagerly all the ceremonies of the Holy Liturgy. The singing of nuns aroused memories of the sweet singing of angels in heaven's churches. My soul filled with the sweetest spiritual joy. I thanked the Lord for bringing this change into my sinful life.

I thanked him while before my eyes appeared my past life at various moments, troubled, sinful, and terribly empty. There was no light and

there were no moments of consolation. These memories caused me deep sadness. I could not endure when the church started to vibrate from the solemn and glorious song, "Ize cherubs". which announced the most sublime moment of the Holy Liturgy. I felt as if something burst inside my chest. I clenched my heart, but my eyes, the last barrier, could not hold anymore. My tears broke through and I felt as if an angel was washing my besmirched soul. The tears dropped into my open wounds and my soul sang: 'Glory to Thee, oh Lord, Glory to Thee.

My spiritual balance was established in that moment and I left the church serene, light and spiritually satisfied. The remainder of my stay in the health spas was completely devoted to my spiritual transformation. My old habits, like walking, listening to drinking songs and other tendencies were left on the deserted street to wait in vain for my return. I spent my time in prayer, reading books, and thinking of all that happened to me.

After returning home, I abandoned reading coffee cups, stopped telling dirty jokes and participating in shallow conversations. I was kind and I smiled, but I preferred to be alone vividly remembering my own experience. I could not get the words of Apostle Peter out of my head, who told me to use the remaining years of my life for my salvation.

I was very careful in the following three months not to tell what had happened to me. I could not sleep during the night and spent much time reading, praying and crying. I fasted rigorously, and asked my wife to prepare lean meals for me on Wednesdays and Fridays, but she and our son could eat whatever they wanted. It was very strange that my wife never asked me about my regular fasting which began upon my return from the health spas.

The first time she asked was two days before three months were to elapse, during the time which I could not tell about my vision. While eating lunch my wife asked, "what happened to you? In the last three months you've become an entirely different person. I cannot recognize you anymore. We have been married eighteen years and you never fasted in all that time, let alone on Wednesday and Friday of every week. You don't read coffee cups anymore. You've lost your former sense of humour. You don't gather the women from our neighbourhood to tell them funny stories. What stopped me from asking you about all this and forced me to prepare your food separately?"

Well, God's might did not allow my wife to ask me anything until the three months were almost over. I told her to be patient for two more days, and then I would tell her everything. Two days later I gathered my wife, her sister and my son to hear my story. I told them everything as it happened. They crossed themselves in amazement; they believed all I said. Without asking their opinion, I told them from today I want you to stop cursing. I advise you to pray to God and go to church. We will celebrate our Slava, Saint Paraskeva, regularly. I also advise you to fast and to take Communion and not to object to my fasting on Wednesday, Friday and on all other fast days. I also do not want to be disturbed when I pray to the Lord at home.

My wife and my son promised to stop cursing, to believe in God, to cross themselves before and after meals and before going to bed, and to celebrate Krsna Slava. They did not agree to fast every fast day, to go to church, or to pray in the morning and in the evening. My wife said she would take Communion once a year, and that both she and our son would fast on Good Friday, Holy Cross day and on the Feast of the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist.

I did not attempt to force them to be more devoted to saving their souls if they did not feel like doing it voluntarily. Several days later I went to the monastery Zica to confess and take Communion. Before I decided upon Zica, I thought very long about where I should go. Finally the thought prevailed that it would be best if I went to where all of these things had happened.

When I arrived at the monastery, I asked a nun to tell Bishop Vasilije that I would like to confess and take Communion and that I felt the need to do that before him. I told her briefly what had happened to me and that because of my experience I wanted to see the Bishop. I soon received permission to do so. When I entered his room he stood waiting for me. I bowed and said, "God help us!" He answered, "God help us, my son!" Then I kissed a cross in his hand and said, "Reverend, bless me." "God bless you, my son!" answered the Bishop.

He noticed that I was nervous, so with a soft voice he offered me a chair. He asked me from where I came, and I told them that I was born in Zakuta, but that I lived in Kragujevac for a long time. He smiled and said, "you were born in my diocese." The Bishop was further interested to know whether I had a family and where I worked. Then he asked me to tell him patiently and calmly everything that had happened to me. I told him all from beginning to end. While I talked, he watched me

attentively and listened carefully. Here and there he crossed himself in amazement and thanked the Lord for his mercy and divine gift, saying, "God have mercy! and "My lord, your Might, Power and Mercy are Great."

When he heard everything, he told me that my soul most likely left my body during my vision and that during that time I was dead. "Are you spiritually ready to confess?" asked the Bishop. When I gave a positive answer, he told me to kiss the cross and the icon and then to kneel. The Bishop then covered my head with the Epitrachelion and said, "Dushan, my son, confess now all of your sins. Do not conceal anything. I will listen and then I will say a prayer for forgiveness. After that you will receive holy Communion, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and the Lord will forgive you your sins. Speak freely about all your acts of sin, words and thoughts in your entire life. Do not fear that I will tell anyone about your sins. Only the Lord and I will know. We who take a confession must keep the secret."

These words relaxed me completely, and I told him slowly about all my sins. During the confession I cried, sobbed and prayed to the Lord and the mother of Jesus Christ to forgive me, since I cursed both of them. After I told him all the sins I could remember, Bishop Vasilije read the prayers for a long time above my head and asked me several times whether I had remorse for my sins. Crying, I answered him that I had repented from the bottom of my heart and my soul, and I promised to stay away from sins.

When he finished the prayer, he removed the Epitrachelion from my head. I then kissed the cross and the icon. Immediately thereafter, the bishop anointed me and started to read the prayer before Communion. When I took holy Communion I felt indescribable pleasure and relief. The feeling experienced after that first real and sincere confession is impossible to describe. Joy, happiness, satisfaction and lightness filled and delighted my soul. I felt born again.

When I told the Bishop how I felt, he said, "Dushan, my son, that is the sign that the Lord has forgiven all your sins. You have been blessed. What you saw and heard is great, and I hope that from now on you will not sin again. I received much useful advice from the Bishop. He told me to think about death more often since one who thinks of death will sin less. He also told me that I should not fear a brief earthly life, because this life is short in comparison with eternity. I might live to be 100 years old, but I should always pray as if I might die tomorrow.

I am very happy that the Lord's mercy put me back on the road of faith. I thank the Lord from the bottom of my heart and from the whole of my soul for all rewards, reprimands, and punishments which he gives me through his Holy Providence. I pray to the Lord that all who become acquainted with my spiritual restoration may believe in it. I hope it reveals to them as it did to me, the right road of salvation for their souls. Have blessing and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.