

***Interview with Fr. Patricio Chuquimarca***

**What has your experience been with the Eucharist?**

In childhood, I remember that my family and I would go to mass, but it did not resonate with my life. Going to mass at 6:30 am every Sunday was just something we would do. I had to go, but I went complaining. Yet, there were moments in which I was moved to believe that the celebration of the Eucharist was more than I realized. I remember having an intuition that God was calling me in those moments. However, as I became a teenager, I started searching. I joined a youth group, which helped me. But the world was more enticing. I knew that it was wrong to receive communion in a state of sin, but I became so immersed in the world that I would barely go to confession twice a year. Then as my family was trying to get more involved with the Church, we joined a Christian initiation charism in my parish, the Neo-Catechumenal Way. There the Lord began to show me that the Eucharist is essential to the journey of faith. Little by little, I realized that I was running away from the vocation that I felt as a child. It was during a pilgrimage in Ecuador after a big celebration of the Eucharist when I said, “Lord, I will follow you.” Some years after as a seminarian, we visited the missions of California and during the Eucharist I experienced him in Psalm 8, “What is man that you should care for him?” For many years I thought that God was doing an injustice to me; I felt like a victim. I did not see my sins. I justified them with my self-pity, convinced that God was screwing up my life. As time went by, God was showing me how He was taking care of my life. He brought me from hell to life as in the Easter vigil. For me today as a priest, to receive communion is the greatest action that Christ does with me and the people - we become one with Jesus Christ when we receive His body and blood. It’s always awe-inspiring that He lets Himself be broken by me and gives Himself for me and the assembly. He does not come with a stick and does not demand. Instead he transforms my life as a priest, nourishing me so I can keep walking in this mission.

**What is your favorite Eucharistic miracle?**

I don’t have a favorite Eucharistic miracle. What touches me is how St. Therese of Lisieux loved the Eucharist. She loved Jesus and was excited to receive communion since she was little, unlike me. She would sketch the Eucharist and was a sacristan in her convent.

**What would you like your parishioners to know about the Eucharist?**

I would like them to participate in the Eucharist not as an obligation but as an encounter with Jesus Christ, i.e. that they have an experience of joy. I try to say the prayers slowly during mass, so they can really listen. I encourage them to go to confession or to go to confession more often so that they can participate in the fullness of this celebration, so they can receive communion. Without it, we cannot live because we are not nourished.