

APOSTLES OF THE REAL PRESENCE
Devoted to Restoring the Faith and Understanding in the Real Presence of
Jesus Christ in the Eucharist

EUCCHARISTIC MIRACLES

The greatest treasure in the Catholic Church is, without question, the Holy Eucharist, in which Jesus Christ humbly assumes the appearance of bread. Whether retained in simple chapels or grand basilicas, the Eucharist remains a sign of the Heavenly Father's unwillingness to be physically separated from His children. His children, on the other hand, have not always appreciated this presence and, as painful as it is to consider, many have abused the gift by receiving it unworthily, by doubting the Real Presence of God in the Sacred Host, or by treating the Sacrament with indifference. For these reasons the Saviour has seen fit at times to prove His presence by performing Eucharistic miracles of various kinds. Let us now visit some of the times our Lord has seen fit to prove His real presence through Eucharistic miracles.

The Miracle Of Regensburg, Germany, 1257. For many years there were in Regensburg (formerly called Ratisbon) two chapels with the same name, St. Saviour, and both have interesting histories involving the Blessed Sacrament. The oldest was founded in the year 1255. On March 25 of that year, which was Holy Thursday, a priest named Dompfarrer Ulrich von Dornberg was scheduled to bring the Blessed Sacrament to the sick members of his parish. On reaching a little stream called Bachgasse, the priest carefully set foot on the narrow plank that served as a bridge - and promptly slipped, dropping the ciborium he had been carrying. The Hosts spilled from the vessel onto the bank of the stream and it was with some difficulty that the priest collected them.

The parishioners, on hearing of the accident, decided to build a chapel on the site where the Hosts had been soiled, in reparation for the disrespect done to the Blessed Sacrament - even though the incident had been unintentional. The erection of a wooden chapel was started the same day and was completed three days later, on March 28. Bishop Albert of Regensburg called the little wooden structure St. Saviour's Chapel and consecrated it on September 8, 1255. The miracle of Regensburg occurred in this chapel two years later.

During the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, a certain priest (whose name is not given) wondered about the real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. All at once, the corpus on the large altar crucifix before him seemed to come alive. One of the hands of Our Lord detached itself from the cross, stretched forward, and removed the chalice from the hands of the priest! With shock and fear, he stepped backward, gazed intently at the miracle, and fervently repented of his doubt. It was only then that the chalice was restored to him.

After this miracle, great crowds visited the church, many traveling great distances. With the offerings that were generously given, the wooden chapel was replaced with a stone structure in 1260. Sometime after the stone chapel was completed, its name was changed from St. Saviour's Chapel to *Kreuzkapelle* or Cross Chapel in honor of the miraculous crucifix that was greatly venerated there.

The Miracle Of Middleburg-Louvain, Belgium, 1374. Time has obscured the name of the noble lady who is first mentioned in the history of this miracle, but it is known that she was a wealthy native of Middleburg. She was kind to her domestics and so solicitous for their spiritual advancement that she taught them herself, inspiring them by her zealous observance of the Church's traditional practices.

On the first Sunday of the holy season of Lent of 1374, in accord with her usual custom she encouraged her servants to prepare for this season of penance by going to Confession and receiving Holy Communion. Her words, however, were accepted by the servants only as a duty they had to perform. One of the servants, known simply as Jean of Cologne, felt obliged to participate with the others for fear of being disgraced, but he approached the Holy Sacrament without having first prepared himself by confessing his sins in the Sacrament of Penance.

Kneeling with the others at the Communion railing, he awaited the approach of the priest. But as soon as the Host was placed upon Jean's tongue, it turned to flesh, which he was unable to swallow! Frightened by the unexpected development, he attempted to hide his difficulty, but then made the mistake of biting into the flesh. At that moment three drops of blood fell from his lips, staining the cloth that was draped over the Communion railing. Startled at the sight of the bloody flesh in Jean's mouth and the blood dripping from it, the priest reacted promptly by removing the Host and respectfully carrying it to the altar, where he placed it in a small golden vessel.

It is reported that Jean was punished for his sacrilegious Communion by being instantly blinded. Feeling overwhelming remorse for his sin, he knelt at the feet of the priest and confessed his sin before the entire congregation.

His sincere sorrow resulted in the restoration of his sight. Thereafter, Jean is said to have led an exemplary life and to have maintained to his death a great reverence for the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Eucharistic Miracles And The Saints. St. Anthony of Padua (d. 1231), was involved in a most dramatic miracle of the Eucharist. It also involved, of all things, a mule. The history of the saint relates that a man named Boniville, believed to have been an Albigensian heretic who rejected the validity of all the Sacraments, was one day in Toulouse questioning the saint about the Sacrament of the Altar. Boniville denied the real presence of Jesus Christ in the consecrated Host, while the saint steadfastly affirmed it. As a test, one or the other suggested that the choice be made by Boniville's mule. Both men agreed.

The mule was kept in its stall for three days, and deprived of food during all that time. At the end of the fast, a great crowd of both believers and unbelievers assembled to witness the proceedings. When the mule was brought before St. Anthony, he held a consecrated Host before the animal, while Boniville attempted to feed it oats and hay. The mule took no notice of the food, but fell to its knees before the Blessed Sacrament. The Catholics who witnessed the miracle expressed unbounded joy, while the unbelievers were thoroughly confused. Boniville is said to have been subsequently converted, together with a great number of the heretics.

Eucharistic Fasts. One of the most frequent of the miraculous phenomena which have occurred in the lives of the saints is the Eucharistic fast, in which the Eucharist was the principal, or only, food during prolonged fasts - or was the sole nourishment for years at a time. The following is one of the many saints who have maintained such fasts.

The fast of St. Catherine of Siena (d. 1380) has been recorded for us by none other than one of her confessors, Bl. Raymond of Capua. In his biography of St. Catherine he informs us that following a vision of Our Lord, food was no longer necessary to the saint. Bl. Raymond writes: "When she was obliged to take food, she was so incommoded that it would not remain in the stomach and it would be quite impossible to describe her grievous pains on such occasions." At the start of her fast, the confessor who served her at the time commanded her to take food daily, but after a time the saint asked him: "If therefore you see, by the numerous experiments of which you have been witness, that I am killing myself by taking nourishment, why do you not forbid me, as you would forbid me to fast, if the fast produced a similar result?"

Bl. Raymond tells us that the confessor had nothing to reply to this reasoning and said to her, "Henceforth act according to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, for I perceive that God is accomplishing marvelous things in you." Sometime later, when her confessor inquired whether she did not at least experience an appetite, the saint replied, "God satisfies me so in the Holy Eucharist that it is impossible for me to desire any species of corporal nourishment." On asking if she did not at least experience hunger on the days on which she did not communicate, the saint answered, "His sole presence satiates me, and I acknowledge that, to be happy, it even suffices for me to see a priest who has just said Mass."

When St. Catherine's fast became well-known many criticized her, and even religious persons were opposed to her. Some attributed the fast to ". . . a kind of vanity, that she did not fast really, but fed herself well in secret." Others said she wished to be noticed and that she was being deceived by the devil. Bl. Raymond writes: "Catherine was willing to appease their murmurs, and determined that every day she would go once and take a seat at the common table and endeavor to eat. Although she used neither meat, nor wine, nor drink, nor eggs, and did not even touch bread. what she took, or rather, what she tried to take, caused her such sufferings that those that saw her, however hard-hearted they were, were moved to compassion; her stomach could digest nothing, and rejected whatever was taken into it; she afterwards suffered the most terrible pains and her whole body appeared to be swollen; she did not swallow the herbs which she chewed, she only drew from them their juice and rejected their substance. She then took pure water to cool her mouth; but every day she was forced to throw up what she had taken, and that with so much difficulty that it was necessary to assist her by every possible means. To this Bl. Raymond adds, "As I was frequently witness of this suffering, I felt an extreme compassion for her, and I counselled her to let men talk, and spare herself such torture . . ." (Joan Carroll Cruz, "Eucharistic Miracles", Tan Books and Publishers, Rockford, IL, 1987)

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