

Padre Pio Prayer Groups
National Office
St. Francis of Assisi
1901 Prior Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19809

tel: (302) 798-1454 fax: (302) 798-3360 website: pppg.org email: pppgusa@gmail.com

February 2018

Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

The Lord give you His Peace!

In 1263, a priest from the Italian town of Bolsena, while celebrating Mass, after having pronounced the words of Consecration, began to doubt that with those words the bread and wine had truly been transformed into the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus. The document of deposition at the time gives us the textual words the priest said to himself: I do not see anything here, nor do I feel anything, nor can I notice any change; it cannot be true that Jesus Christ is really here. This host is nothing more than a piece of bread.

From a moment of anxious doubt he entered a state of heresy; he went from difficulty to full-blown disbelief! The priest nevertheless continued celebrating Mass for the sake of the people attending, and arrived at the elevation of the Host.

As he did so, droplets of blood fell from the host onto the corporal (the cloth that is placed under the chalice and paten during Mass to catch any consecrated drops or particles that might accidentally fall on the altar). One can only imagine the fear that possessed the priest at such a sight. With hands raised high holding up the Sacred Host, in an act of adoration of the Sacred Body of Jesus, he remained for a rather lengthy period contemplating the mystery and miracle that had just occurred.

The people assisting at the Mass also saw the wonderful happening and burst forth into a cry of adoration and praise: O Precious Blood! O Divine Blood; who is responsible for this shedding of blood? Others exclaimed: O Divine Blood, flow over our souls, purify us of our sins! Most Blessed Blood, call down the Divine Mercy upon us!

The shouting of the crowd jolted the priest out of his contemplation of the Precious Body and Blood he held. He found a dry spot to rest the Precious Body upon the corporal that had been almost totally dampened with the droplets of the Precious Blood. His eyes and heart were opened. He saw the truth and recognized the answer to his doubt, and gratefully accepted this miraculous response of God's merciful love to his own mistrust of Jesus' promise to be with you always until the end of the age, in such a marvelous way.

Continuing the celebration of the Mass amidst tears and lengthy meditative pauses, he was able to conclude the Eucharistic celebration. At the end of the Mass, the celebrant attempted to fold the cloth as best he could, but the people came forward and wanted to see for themselves close-up in order to ascertain the truth of the occurrence. The priest showed the faithful the cloth bathed in blood and they, in turn, fell on their knees to adore the miracle and implore divine mercy upon themselves.

News of the event reached Pope Urban IV who at that time was in Orvieto, a city near to Bolsena. The priest brought the Corporal to the pope. He told the story of his doubts and the manner in which the miracle had occurred. Pope Urban IV and those with him recognized the miracle and knelt in adoration of this Eucharistic

Mystery made visible in the Miracle before them. A local feast in honor of the Blessed Sacrament was extended to the entire Church – the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi). This is one of several Eucharistic Miracles that call for our attention when the evil one challenges our faith in Jesus' words and His Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

What happened many centuries ago in Bolsena happens in every Catholic Church around the world when the Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated. There is no longer a visible shedding of blood. No longer is the ground bathed in blood or the heads of sinners sprinkled with the saving Blood of Jesus, as the early Israelites were sprinkled with the blood of the animals sacrificed to reconfirm their commitment to the Covenant.

What does happen is that hearts and souls are cleansed and renewed when the eyes of the faithful see the Lord in Sacrifice as He offers Himself in Sacrament to all. The re-presentation of the Passion-Death-Resurrection of Jesus is perpetuated through the centuries in the Church. At the Consecration of the Bread and Wine the 'Presence' becomes 'Real' and our relationship with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit achieves an always greater intensity.

The Presence of God among us is a Privilege. This privilege must be participated if we are to experience the power of grace available to us. The three key words here are: 'presence', 'privilege', 'participation'. They remind us that: God walks with His people. His people have no right to His presence. God offers us His presence freely. It is a gift of God's love. To profit from the awesome experience, the people of God must enter the moment and participate by responding with and in their lives to God. This response is a sign and a determining factor of our friendship and intimacy with God.

The priest continues in the presence of our Sacramental Lord interceding for the unifying gift of the Spirit, blessings for the Church Suffering and Militant, and imploring the mediation of all those holy souls who now live in the Eternal Presence of God. The Eucharistic Prayer ends with a brief hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, through-with-in Jesus, in the unity of the Spirit. And the People of God acclaim and confirm all that was said and done with 'Amen!' Priest and People of God have 'celebrated' together. They entered the mystery that requires a depth of faith to experience the 'miracle' of a 'presence' that makes the Mystical Body of Christ – who are faithfully gathered in Liturgy – a visible reality for the world to see. Filled with Jesus, we become a sign of hope to a world so desperately in need of that gift.

Hope has always been a rather difficult virtue to comprehend. Hope is not a static, passive stance that we take. Hope is not dwelling on something we desire and wait for it to happen or to be given to us. Hope is a very proactive virtue that flows from faith and fosters love. Christian hope is not passive resignation. Our own Padre Pio teaches us to be active and to make God's interests ours. In other words, he is telling us that we must seek first the kingdom of God and His justice over us, and God will make our interests His. God will come to our aid in our temporal needs as we journey to the fullness of time where nothing is needed because all we could ever hope for is there - GOD forever!

Writing to Raffaolina Cerase, who experienced great pain and anguish in her spiritual journey, Padre Pio explains that such things are not a punishment, but a test of love. He encourages her to look to the future (to hope) with confident and peaceful trust: You say you are anxious about the future, but don't you know that the Lord is with you always and that our enemy has no power over anyone who has resolved to belong entirely to Jesus? Moreover, isn't God good and faithful to the point of not permitting you to be tempted beyond your strength?...If we were left to ourselves we should always be falling and never remain on our feet. Humble yourself, then, at the delightful thought that you are in the divine arms of Jesus, the best of fathers, like a little infant in its mother's arms, and sleep peacefully with the certainty that you are being guided towards the destination that will be to your greatest advantage. How can we be afraid to remain in such loving

arms when our entire being is consecrated to God? (1914 March 29) What greater way can this consecration to God be realized than through our entering the mystery of the Eucharist we 'celebrate' together, and experience the transforming 'miracle' that makes us a people of loving service?

It never fails to astound me how many of our Catholics, privileged to possess such a magnificent gift as the Eucharist, who assist at the re-presentation of Calvary, and participate personally in the act of their own redemption, should so often disregard the importance of the Eucharist in their lives. Often one can hear good Catholics say, "If I had only been there"... "If I had stood at the cross" ... "If only I could have seen and spoken with Jesus", and the like. My response is: "Go to the tabernacle, open your heart, your mind and your eyes. You will see Him. You will be there before Him. You will hear Him and speak with Him".

As Spiritual Children of Padre Pio, we cannot minimize the importance of the Eucharist and the celebration of this great gift. Padre Pio's entire religious life was centered around this Sacrament that he not only celebrated, but with which he identified. In Persona Christi (In the Person of Christ) he climbed the altar steps. As the Savior did on His own road to Calvary, Padre Pio's calvary began each day at the foot of the altar. The anguish and intensity noticed in his eyes and movements spoke volumes. The Mass was never a 'boring repetition of ritual', as some imply by their actions or even say with their words. The Mass was always an experience of a resurgence of renewed graces for Him.

The Eucharist we celebrate and receive must ultimately be that way for us. The priest is unique by sacramental ordination and ministry. All God's people benefit with a 'resurgence of renewed graces' when they 'consecrate' their lives together with the bread and wine offered by the priest, and abandon themselves to the will of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

What kind of Lent can we 'do'? Personal sacrifices are fine and gain merit. However, I believe the greatest 'sacrificial act' we can do for Lent would be to assist more frequently at Mass with an active participation made up of preparation before and thanksgiving after Mass, and daily reflection on God's Word heard at the Eucharistic Liturgy. As we share in the common priesthood of the faithful through Baptism, let us pray for those who give us the Eucharist and serve God's people in the ministerial priesthood.

Have a blessed and spiritually fruitful Lent. Let go of your hesitancy in disarming your heart to others, especially those you find difficult, or who may see you that way. Do not set limits to love! Take up the daily cross of your responsibilities, and perform them with peace and joy. Accept difficulties as challenges to grow in grace. Trust the One Who allows them in every life so that we might achieve the perfection to which we are called. Surrender yourself to the One Who gave Himself for us all ... and ... Do not be afraid to deepen your relationship with God (Prayer), detach yourself from all you allow to possess you (Penance), and open your heart and surrender to the Christ Who suffers in others and awaits your love (Almsgiving). Living these three elements especially will assure us of a very fruitful Lenten journey. Do not be afraid to become 'Eucharist'!

May God bless you; Our Lady guide, guard, and protect you; and Padre Pio watch over each one of you, his Spiritual Children, with loving care.

Peace and Blessings
Fr. Francis A. Sariago, O.F.M. Cap.
National Coordinator