



Parishioners' Article
讀者來稿

Marino Restrepo “Talk”

Peter Segers

I had heard that Marino Restrepo was scheduled to give a talk at our Canadian Martyrs Church. A talk about his personal experience and encounter with God. I had heard good things about this same talk when he gave it in previous years, so I decided to attend and check it out.

Since his experience in Colombia, South America 7 years ago, he has been traveling around the world (21 countries now) and describing his experience and his associated faith transformation. He was kidnapped, held ransom, and eventually gained freedom about 6 months later. During this lonely and fearful ordeal, he underwent a spiritual rebirth that brought him back to the Catholic faith of his upbringing.

The details of his story I will leave for him to tell. You can listen to his talk from tapes that are available or (and I highly recommend this option) you can attend his presentation when he next returns to Vancouver. He is definitely a speaker full of conviction and he possesses amazing oratory skills. I'll leave you with one final thought, which occurred to me after listening to Marino. If you found out that you only had 6 months to live, what would you do differently? What unfinished goals or business would you want to accomplish?

There is truly nothing that can change your own living priorities like contemplating the certainty of your own death.



Eucharistic Miracle of Santarem of Portugal – The Eucharist That Bleeds

Michael Sher

Since 1782, a very special Eucharist has been placed on the altar of the Church of St. Stephen in Santarem of Portugal, which is sixty kilometers south of Fatima. According to the church's records, human blood is found coming out from the Eucharist. To this day the precious Relic remains in-corrump. We, a group of pilgrims, were very eager to visit and worship this Holy Miracle. The trip to the church was about an hour's drive from Fatima, the city where we were staying.

As the big coach could not take us directly to the church, we had to get off the coach at the parking lot at the foot of the hill. There, we walked up a narrow path. Several elderly women in our group were going towards the church with the help of walkers or canes. They

followed us closely all the time. Their devotion and perseverance exemplified the power of Holy Spirit. When we arrived at the Church of St. Stephen, we found that it was an old and small church. The local guide then gave a narrative of the Holy Miracle of Santarem. The incident happened on 16 February 1247. A poor woman who was often mistreated by her unfaithful husband found her life miserable. In attempting to save her marriage, she approached to see a sorceress for help. The sorceress said she would grant the woman's wish of renewing the faithful love of her husband for the price of a consecrated host. After great deliberation, she finally consented to the horrible sacrilege.

The ignorant woman then went to Mass at the Church of St. Stephen with a plan to escape with

a consecrated host. After receiving the Eucharist, she took it out of her mouth and wrapped it in her veil then left the church in a hurry. On her way home, sacred blood dripped out from the host. The woman did not notice it until some people asked whether she was hurt. At that juncture, she was aware that something extra-ordinary had happened. She lied to the people that due to her carelessness, she has hurt her head in the church and was going home for treatment. Then she sped home. She was wondering how to handle the consecrated host hidden in her veil.

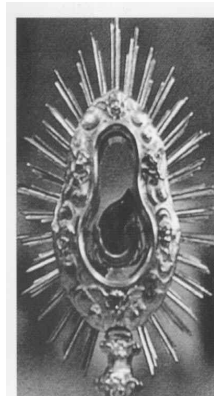
Arriving home, she carefully took out the "Bloody Host" and hid it in the bottom of a trunk in her room. She began to regret what she had done, as she realized that God was present in the piece of bread she carried home. At night, she and her husband discussed and agreed to return the "Body of Christ" to the church the next day. That night, in the small hut where the woman and her husband were dwelling, a mysterious light was shining brightly.

They were awakened by the angels who guarded the "Eucharist". Consequently, without waiting for dawn, they quickly went back to the church and told the priest of their sinful act, asked for forgiveness, and requested the priest to go to their hut to take the bleeding host back to the church. The priest thus collected the sacred blood and put it inside a wax container and it was solemnly returned to the church. Upon hearing the news, the town's people hurried to the church to behold the miracle. Around 1340 AD, i.e. one hundred years later, another miracle happened again. The parish priest of the Church of St. Stephen opened the tabernacle, the wax container holding the sacred host was found shattered in many pieces. The sacred host was then enclosed in a crystal pyx. This pyx was placed in a silver monstrance where it can be seen today.

After an exhaustive investigation by ecclesiastical authorities the miracle was approved, in 1782 AD the church was finally renamed the church of the holy miracle. Today, thousands of people visited the shrine every year for adoration to the Eucharistic miracle, and

now it is one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in Portugal.

Our group of 49 people was escorted by the church's volunteers to view the "Flesh & Blood" Eucharist through a glass window behind the tabernacle. We were just about one or two feet from the "body of Christ" and saw, with our own eyes, the "Body and Blood of Christ". To show respect, none of us had taken any photographs. If I had to describe the "Body of Christ" with words, I would say that it resembled a white piece of flesh submerged in blood. When I was looking at it, I did not have any special feeling. Back to Vancouver, when I received the Eucharist during Mass, I would think of what I saw in the Church of St. Stephen. The almighty Son of God, Jesus Christ, was turned into a woeful piece of flesh and blood. It was then swallowed by us to become the sacred food of our everlasting life. (John 6:5) Before Jesus Christ was crucified, some apostles were so surprised that they left Jesus Christ when they were asked to eat his flesh and drink his blood. (John 6.66) Nowadays, we are so blessed that we can receive Holy Communion during Mass. Have we ever sincerely thanked God for this awe-inspiring and important miracle of love? A person who has been baptized and confirmed is comparable to a person who has taken food. Food can nourish his body, but the "Body of Christ" provides nutrients to his soul, making it immortal. That is why we say the "Body of Christ" is the sacred food that provides everlasting life. (John 6:51)



In fact, the Holy Eucharist itself is a great miracle. It was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and through it, he expressed his greatest love for human beings. Unknowingly, we are inclined not to value the things we can obtain them easily. Next Sunday, when receiving Holy Communion, remember to say "Lord, Jesus Christ, I love you, I thank you."

(Partly excerpt from "Catholic Shrines of W. Europe)