

# The True Presence: Eucharistic Miracles Over the Centuries

By Joseph Pronechen

During the middle of the eighth century, a Basilian monk who was more oriented toward science than faith had persistent doubts about the reality of the bread and wine becoming Christ's true body and true blood at the consecration — until one particular Mass. As he pronounced the words of consecration, "suddenly the monk saw bread turn into Flesh and the wine into Blood," according to documents at the Sanctuary of the Eucharistic Miracle in Lanciano, Italy.

This was heaven's direct answer to the monk — belief quickly replaced his doubts as he invited those at Mass to come and contemplate the living God before their eyes. The faithful can still do so in the Church of San Francesco in Lanciano over a dozen centuries later, as the preserved flesh and coagulated blood remain on display. TheRealPresence.org reports that tests found the flesh is indeed real human flesh. The blood is human blood, too, type AB, the same blood type found on the Shroud of Turin.

Furthermore, in 1973, the World Health Organization's board of governors chose a scientific commission to check the initial findings. After 500 examinations, they verified the 1971 findings, and "declared without doubt that it is a living tissue," reports the Lanciano shrine — and scientifically unexplainable.

The feast of Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, has been celebrated since the mid-13th century and is unsurprisingly tied to a Eucharistic miracle. St. Juliana of Liege was told by Our Lord about the Eucharistic feast, and she asked Pope Urban IV to institute it for the universal Church. Around that time in 1263 another doubting priest stopped to say Mass in Bolsena, Italy, while making a pilgrimage to Rome.

As in the case of the Basilian monk almost 500 years before, during the consecration, this pilgrim priest witnessed blood flowing from the consecrated Host down his hands and onto the corporal. He hurried to nearby Orvieto, where Urban IV was at the time. The Pope had the Host and corporal brought there, and with many Church dignitaries in attendance he put the corporal in the Cathedral of Orvieto for veneration. A year later, in 1264, Urban IV introduced Thomas Aquinas' Proper for a Mass and office honoring the Holy Eucharist as the Body of Christ and through a papal bull instituted the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. On the 700th anniversary of Corpus Christi, Pope St. Paul VI celebrated Mass at the altar containing the miraculous corporal. People visiting the cathedral can still view the corporal, which is taken out for a major procession through the city on Corpus Christi.

Father Timothy Byerley, pastor of St. Peter Catholic Church in Merchantville, New Jersey, has not only visited Orvieto but is familiar with other Eucharistic miracles and uses one as a major teaching moment in his parish. Every year at first Holy Communion time, he shares the story of Lanciano, telling the children: "The Lord helps us by giving us these Eucharistic miracles to help our faith." He added, "This helps the children who receive Jesus for the first time to comprehend or internalize the reality of what they are about to receive in the Holy Eucharist."

Lanciano might be the most famous of all Eucharistic miracles, but there have been many over the centuries, including recent ones. On Christmas Day 2013, a Eucharistic miracle took place in St. Hyacinth's Church in Legnica, Poland, about 200 miles from Krakow. During Communion time, a Host accidentally fell to the floor. The priest at once placed it in a container to dissolve. But two weeks later, as the "Acutis Miracle" site explains, Father Andrzej Ziombra, accompanied by other priest, "noticed that the Host had not dissolved and that a red spot covering a fifth of its surface appeared," Father Ziombra reported. "We decided to inform the bishop, who established a special theological scientific commission to analyze the event."

When two major forensic medicine institutes were asked to examine samples from the Host, both found it was composed of myocardial (heart) tissue. Even more, the second source at the Pomeranian Medical University's department further found it to be "human heart muscle with alterations that often appear during agony." Once the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was given the results, it recognized this as a supernatural experience. Nor was this the only Eucharistic miracle in this century in Poland. On Oct. 12, 2008, 409 miles northeast in Sokółka, Poland, at St. Anthony of Sokółka Church, a priest accidentally dropped a consecrated Host during Mass. He also decided to dissolve that Host in water in the vessel priests use to purify their fingers after Communion.

As several sources would reveal, including the international exhibition "The Eucharistic Miracles of the World" ([MiracoliEucaristici.org/en](http://MiracoliEucaristici.org/en)), designed and created by Servant of God Carlo Acutis, after Mass the nun serving as sacristan placed the container holding the Host in the safe for sacred vessels. A week later, on Oct. 19, the sister checked and found the Host partly dissolved but the rest had a "strange red clot." She called the priest. After many examinations of a sample by everyone from archbishops to doctors and world-renowned scientists, that spot proved to be tissue from a human heart. Scientists — unaware where the samples came from — agreed there was no explanation for this because the bread of the Host had turned into heart muscle and was still living tissue.

In 2009, the Metropolitan Curia of Białystok declared: "The case of Sokółka does not contradict the faith of the Church, but rather confirms it." Indeed, such miracles are a boon to people's faith. "Eucharistic miracles give us a reinforcement that the Eucharistic is a Person and that Person is coming through in the miracles," explained Father Carlos Martins of the Companions of the Cross and director of the Treasures of the Church ministry. "It makes the Eucharist more ... the miracle affords that encounter with Christ be seen anew by people."

On Dec. 8, 1991, several hundred people were at Mass at the outdoor chapel in the Sanctuary of Betania, Venezuela. Father Byerley, who is also vice postulator of the cause of Servant of God Maria Esperanza Bianchini, to whom our Blessed Mother appeared several times at this Church-approved site, described that when the priest was breaking the Host, "he looked at the patent and saw a red spot forming on one of the fragments of the Host." The priest covered it and called Bishop Pio Bello Ricardo, who immediately had tests conducted that, on Dec. 12, confirmed an AB-positive blood type.

Bishop Pio Bello "declared the bleeding Host a miraculous event," confirmed Father Byerley, who has seen the miraculous Host. "The Host is kept in a secure monstrance in the convent of sisters in Los Teques," where it is adored.

At the parish of St. Mary in Buenos Aires, a Eucharistic miracle happened not once, but three times — in 1992, 1994, and on Aug. 15, 1996, when a Host fell to the floor during Communion and then was placed in a container to dissolve. By Aug. 26, the Host had transformed into blood. At the time the archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Maria Bergoglio, asked professor Ricardo Castañon Gomez to examine and evaluate what had occurred. "The Eucharistic Miracles of the World" tour highlights the words of Castañon Gomez. Among his many findings: In 2000 a renowned expert on tissues found the samples to have human skin and white blood cells. In 2003 the same expert said the tissue was that of an inflamed heart, meaning "that the person to whom they belonged must have suffered a lot."

In 2005, Castañon Gomez asked another top expert at Columbia University to investigate. That scientist pinpointed the tissue as from the heart, particularly the left ventricle, and labeled it still-living tissue that was from a suffering person. Castañon Gomez concluded that the Lord "in the miracle wanted to show us his myocardium, which is the muscle that gives life to the whole heart, just as the Eucharist does with the Church. And why the left ventricle? Because from it comes the purified blood and Jesus is the one who purifies his Church from her sins."

Knowing about Eucharistic miracles has enhanced Brianna Pavlish's faith "in the True Presence most profoundly," she told the Register. The youth-ministry coordinator at Our Lady of Grace parish in Indian

Land, South Carolina, explained: “As a millennial, I find it amusing that my peers are constantly looking for science to prove the existence of God. Our Lord loves us so much, and he wants to make himself known to us through the breaking of the bread. As someone who sees the face of Jesus in the Consecration, how can I doubt that the Eucharist is truly the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ? As far as scientific proof of Eucharistic miracles, why would people continue to doubt Our Lord when the blood type is the universal donor and always comes back as cells from the heart of a man in distress?”

Through Eucharistic miracles, Jesus surely does strength our faith. The Real Presence was also evident in Siena on a distant August day, Aug. 14, 1370, at the Basilica of St. Francis, when thieves stole consecrated Hosts. Three days later, on Aug. 17, a parishioner noticed a light in an offering box. In it were all the stolen Hosts. Those Hosts remain intact today and can still be seen there, displayed once a month and on Corpus Christi, when they are processed through the town — truly the ever-living Body and Blood of Christ.

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Joseph Pronechen Joseph Pronechen is staff writer with the National Catholic Register since 2005 and before that a regular correspondent for the paper. His articles have appeared in a number of national publications including Columbia magazine, Soul, Faith and Family, Catholic Digest, Catholic Exchange, and Marian Helper. His religion features have also appeared in Fairfield County Catholic and in major newspapers. He is the author of Fruits of Fatima — Century of Signs and Wonders. He holds a graduate degree and formerly taught English and courses in film study that he developed at a Catholic high school in Connecticut. Joseph and his wife Mary reside on the East Coast.

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