**Eucharistic Miracles**

At the center of the Catholic faith is the belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – in the Eucharist. The doctrine of transubstantiation (“change of one substance to another”) states that the substance of the bread and wine truly change into the substance of the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ. Though the *appearance* of bread and wine remains, it is only an appearance: in truth, the bread and wine no longer exist – rather, it is Christ.

At various times throughout the history of the Church, this reality has been made visible or sensible in what are typically referred to as Eucharistic Miracles. From the many Eucharistic Miracles documented throughout the history of the Church, we will discuss three: Lanciano, Italy (8th century); Santarem, Portugal (13th century); and Chirattakonam, India (2001).

Before looking at these three miracles, it is important to make a critical point: at *every* Mass a miracle takes place; the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. The “Eucharistic Miracles” that we are discussing here make this reality present to the *senses* (something in the appearance changes as well).

**Lanciano, Italy (ca. 750)**

In the eighth century, a priest in Lanciano was struggling with doubts about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. One day, as he was celebrating Mass, the Sacred Host changed visibly to Flesh and the Precious Blood took on the visible appearance of Blood. Typically, as was mentioned above, though the substance of the bread and wine truly change into the Body and Blood of Christ, the *appearance* of bread and wine remain – here, the appearance itself was changed as well. The Host and the Blood were preserved and, almost 1300 years later, can still be seen to this day at Saint Francis Church in Lanciano.

In the 1970s, with the approval of the Church, Dr. Edward Linoli, a professor of science, was given permission to study the Flesh and Blood. Below is a summary of his findings:

1. The “miraculous Flesh" is authentic flesh consisting of muscular striated tissue of the myocardium.

2. The “miraculous Blood" is truly blood. The chromatographic analysis indicated this with

absolute and indisputable certainty.

3. The immunological study shows with certitude that the flesh and the blood are human, and the immuno – hematological test allows us to affirm with complete objectivity and certitude that both belong to the same blood type AB – the same blood type as that of the man of the Shroud [of Turin, believed by many to be the burial cloth of Jesus] and the type most characteristic of Middle Eastern populations.

4. The proteins contained in the blood have the normal distribution, in the identical percentage as that of the serous-proteic chart for normal fresh blood.

5. No histological dissection has revealed any trace of salt infiltrations or preservative

substances used in antiquity for the purpose of embalming.

("Eucharistic Miracle of Lanciano, Italy, 750 A.D.” *The Real Presence Eucharistic Education and Adoration Association*. 2006. Web. 3 Jan. 2015)

In summary, the studies show that the Flesh and Blood have all the properties of true, living human flesh and blood.

**Santarem, Portugal (13th century)**

Fearing that her husband was unfaithful, but unable to get proof, a woman finally went to enlist the help of a sorceress. The sorceress agreed, but demanded that the woman bring a Consecrated Host as payment for her services. Though the woman was tormented with guilt about dishonoring Christ in that way, she decided to go through with it. At Mass, the woman received the Host, but, rather than consuming the Body of Christ, she placed the Host in a cloth and went to seek out the sorceress. On the way, the Sacred Host began to bleed; the woman was struck with fear and rushed home, placing the bleeding Host in a drawer in her bedroom. During the night, a beautiful light shone from the drawer. The woman and her husband spent the night in prayer before Christ and, in the morning, called on the parish priest. He arrived at the house, listened to the woman’s story, and then brought the Blessed Sacrament back to Saint Stephen Church accompanied by a procession. To this day, this Eucharistic Miracle can be seen in the same Church (afterward renamed the “Church of the Most Holy Miracle”) in Santarem.

In 1340, a second miracle occurred. Upon opening the tabernacle where the Miraculous Host was reserved, it was discovered that the original beeswax vessel had degenerated. In its place was a beautiful crystal vessel, containing the Host and the Blood. Since that time, several claims of additional miracles have been made, including an active flow of Blood, and images of the face of Christ (“The Eucharistic Miracles at Santarem, Portugal,” *Catholic Doors Ministry*, n.d., web 8 Jan. 2015; “Eucharistic Miracle of Santarem, Portugal, 1247,” *The Real Presence Eucharistic Education and Adoration Association*, 2006, web 8 Jan. 2015; “Santarem Eucharistic Miracle,” *Sacred Destinations*, n.d., web 8 Jan. 2015).

**Chirattakonam, India (2001)**

We conclude with a modern day Eucharistic Miracle. Fr. Johnson Karnoor, pastor of the Church of Saint Mary in Chirattakonam, relates what happened:

On April 28, 2001, in the parish church of St. Mary of Chirattakonam, we began the Novena to

St. Jude Thaddeus as we did every year. At 8:49am, I exposed the Most Holy Sacrament in the monstrance for public adoration. After a few moments I saw what appeared to be three dots in the Holy Eucharist. I then stopped praying and began to look at the monstrance, also inviting the faithful to admire the three dots. I then asked the faithful to remain in prayer and reposed the monstrance in the tabernacle. On April 30th, I celebrated the Holy Mass and on the following day I left for Trivandrum. On Saturday morning, the 5th of May 2001, I opened the church for the usual liturgical celebrations. I vested for Mass and went to open the tabernacle to see what had happened to the Eucharist in the monstrance. I immediately noted in the Host, a figure, to the likeness of a human face. I was deeply moved and asked the faithful to kneel and begin praying. I thought I alone could see the face so I asked the altar server what he noticed in the monstrance. He answered: ‘I see the figure of a man.’ I noticed that the rest of the faithful were looking intently at the monstrance (“Eucharistic Miracle of Chirattakonam, Archdiocese of Trivandrum, India, 2001,” *The Real Presence Eucharistic Education and Adoration Association*, 2006, web 8 Jan. 2015).

This occurrence reminds us that Eucharistic Miracles continue to happen in our own day. Again, these are extraordinary instances where Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist is made visible and sensible to us; we must never forget that there is a miracle every time the Mass is celebrated. The Eucharist is truly the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ – the extraordinary “Eucharistic Miracles” are meant to remind us of this awesome reality. We can receive Jesus Christ Himself in the Eucharist every day if we wish! We can also visit Jesus by spending time in Eucharistic Adoration. The miracle of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Catholic faith: it is the greatest of our Treasures.