

“The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

In 1996, at St. Mary's Parish in Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the 7pm Mass for the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, someone noticed a host at the foot of a crucifix near the altar and notified the priest celebrant. The priest, Fr. Alejandro Pezet, went and picked it up off the ground and returned to the altar where he intended to consume it since he was unsure as to whether it had been consecrated or not. Right before he was about to consume it, he noticed how dirty it was, and so instead he directed a Eucharistic minister to place it in a receptacle with water so that it would dissolve. It was placed in the tabernacle. Eleven days later, Fr. Pezet looked in the Tabernacle and noticed something very odd. The host had become a reddish substance.

The Archbishop of Buenos, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, formed a commission to investigate. Dr. Ricardo Castañón Gómez, a clinical psychologist who led the commission, sent a sample of the reddish substance to one of the most highly regarded forensic laboratories in the world, Forensic Analytical Laboratories in Hayward, California. He did not tell them where the substance came from, he simply paid for it to be analyzed. The result came back as was blood with human DNA and a fibrous material that they could not identify. The laboratory recommended an examination of the sample by a histopathologist, an expert in the study of human tissue. Dr. Castañón Gómez followed that advice, and the histopathologist identified the substance as inflamed heart tissue, and not only that, but inflamed heart tissue with intact white blood cells. The histopathologist didn't know this, but by this point the sample was four years old. Now white blood cells can't survive outside the bloodstream for more than 15 minutes, and the sample by this point was four years old. Dr. Castañón Gómez then brought the sample to one of the most highly regarded experts in forensic medicine in the United States, Dr. Frederick Zugibe, Professor of Pathology at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, and Director of Cardiovascular Research at Veteran's Hospital in Pittsburgh. Dr. Zugibe identified the sample to be muscular tissue from the myocardial muscle of the heart, near the left ventricle. The myocardium is the heart muscle that creates the pressure to pump blood. It is

therefore the muscle that plays an integral role in giving life to the whole heart, and in turn the whole body. The left ventricle is the area of the heart that pumps oxygen-rich blood from the lungs to the body. This muscular tissue was traumatized, inflamed. Dr. Zugibe, who also had no idea where the sample came from, identified three possibilities for why the tissue was traumatized. One. Fatty plaque buildup. Two. Obstruction of the coronary artery by a blood clot. Three. A severe blow to the chest over the heart. Dr. Zugibe told Dr. Castañón Gómez. “Your patient suffered a lot.” Dr. Zugibe also confirmed the presence of intact white blood cells.

The Eucharist as we know gives spiritual life to the whole body of Christ. Are we willing to allow ourselves the possibility that God was trying to make a point with all of this?

The blood type of this sample, like all other Eucharistic Miracles involving blood samples that have been tested, was type AB, the rarest of all blood types but also rather common among Jews of Jesus’ time. AB Plasma is universal; it can be used for all patients regardless of their blood type. The purpose of plasma in blood is to transport nutrients and proteins to the parts of the body that need it. Of course Jesus would be a universal plasma donor.

Before being asked to undertake this investigation, Dr. Castañón Gómez was an atheist. As he oversaw this investigation, as he perfectly executed the scientific methodology he had been trained in, he became more and more dumbfounded. How in the world could this have happened? He himself had been involved in this process from start to finish. He was the one who had extracted the reddish substance from the receptacle in water. He was the one who took the sample to various medical experts, first in Argentina and then in the United States. He went through a profound conversion and now travels the world trying to wake us up to the reality of Eucharistic miracles.

There came a point when Castanon-Gomez asked a very wise priest what all of this meant. Do you know which verse the priest directed him to? Luke 19:40. That’s the point where Jesus is entering Jerusalem on a colt, a point which many saints like St. Faustina believe his Passion really began, and people are spreading their cloaks on the road, and as he approaches the Mount of Olives the disciples began to

joyfully praise God for all the mighty deeds they have seen, but then some of the Pharisees in the crowd say to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." And Jesus says, "I say to you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!"

Reflecting on this, Dr. Castanon Gomez says, "That's why I think the stones are talking instead of us. That's why I think that we should be talking about this."

Why aren't we willing to talk about these things? Most Americans, after all, last time I checked the surveys, still believe in miracles. Why are we so hesitant to look explore them? With the many miracles that occur in connection within our faith tradition, shouldn't we be among the first to talk about them? What's holding us back? What are we afraid of? Do we act in spirit like the people listening to Jesus and grumbling amongst themselves?

This scientist is one of very few people in modern history, a scientist who has brought the tools of modern science to bear on studying one of about 150 Eucharistic miracles recorded in all of history. Down through the ages, millions upon millions of Catholics have not believed in the Real Presence. And down through the ages, the Eucharistic Miracles have also been occurring. The stones have been crying out. Are we listening?

Jesus is crying out to be recognized in the fullness of his presence in the Eucharist. He is reminding us that He is alive in the Eucharist. And through these miracles he is validating the Church when she teaches that the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice, that "The victim is one and the same; only the manner of offering is different." That "In the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is offered in an unbloody manner."

With these words from today's Gospel passage, Jesus confounds his listeners. They can't accept that he is the living bread from Heaven, that the bread he will give is his flesh for the life of the world. And we will see in next Sunday's Gospel reading, which picks up where this passage concludes, many of his listeners will leave him after hearing this. Jesus will receive a very negative response, despite everything he has done to demonstrate up to this point that He is truly the Son of God.

Something similar happened to Dr. Castanon Gomez with what he presented. I once had the opportunity to submit a question to Dr. Castanon Gomez during one of his talks. I asked him how the scientific community had responded to his findings. Do you know what he said? He said 99% were very respectful, even positive. They accepted as valid his methodology, they accepted as valid his careful documentation of everything he had done. But the *scientific journals* didn't want to publish his findings. The ones in Germany were very blunt. He said they accused him of using them to demonstrate something that they do not want to demonstrate. There it is. They *did not want* to demonstrate it. Some also journalists came and interviewed him, and they said, Doctor, I will write a four-page article on Sunday but then later there was only a tiny blurb or nothing at all because their editors had killed it or winnowed it down to almost nothing. So much for the dialogue between faith and science that the Church calls for. Science, it seems to me, pretty much slammed the door in this instance.

But Dr. Castanon Gomez also said, I have more problems among believers. I have more problems with believers because because many believers say, I don't need the proof; I believe... but then same believers don't go to Mass or only go during Easter and Christmas. And that greatly saddened Dr. Castanon Gomez the former atheist, because he saw perhaps for the first time the devastating effect of a lukewarm faith. But he would not forget what he had learned. He said, "*I know he's alive.*"

Brothers and sisters, the stones are crying out. Jesus in the Eucharist is crying out to be recognized, to be approached with faith and reverence, to be acknowledged as fully present in his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. He's crying out to be understood in the Eucharist, to be loved and approached with open arms, so that we can receive the many graces he wishes to give to willing hearts. He is ready to give life to our souls through the Eucharist. And so let us allow ourselves to open our hearts to his Heart. Dr. Castanon Gomez perhaps put it best when he said, "We must pay Love with love."

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