

INDIA

Holy See recognises miracle of Jesus' face in consecrated Host

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There's good news, from India, of another immense grace granted by God to His Church and to all His pilgrim children. The Holy See has recognised a Eucharistic miracle took place in the Church of Christ the King in Vilakkannur, Kerala, India, on 15 November

2013. During morning Mass, at the moment of consecration, the face of Jesus appeared stamped on the large Host held by Father Thomas Pathickal.

The Vatican's announcement was reported by *Matters India* last Friday, 9 May. It was the Archbishop of Tellicherry to break the news first, Monsignor Joseph Pamplany, during a ceremony in the same church where the miracle occurred eleven and a half years ago. Monsignor Pamplany reported that the apostolic nuncio to India, Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, had sent the archdiocese a communication from the Holy See which recognised the miracle. The solemn proclamation is scheduled for Saturday 31 May in the Church of Christ the King in Vilakkannur, where Archbishop Girelli will preside over Mass.

As reported by *Catholic Vote*, Monsignor Pamplany said that the Holy See considers this miracle contributes to increasing faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Indeed, from the very beginning, there have been great spiritual fruits. At the same time, the archbishop recalled that the real presence is a Catholic doctrine whose truth does not depend on the occurrence or non-occurrence of miracles. In effect, it is a dogma founded on the words of our Lord, and transubstantiation itself — the conversion of the whole substance of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus at the moment of consecration — is a miracle in itself, even though it is not visible to our senses. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states in the wake of the Council of Trent: «In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained."» (CCC, n. 1374).

Nonetheless, for two thousand years, this dogma has been met with scepticism, even among many baptised Christians and clergy. And despite that, during this time, the Lord has provided numerous confirmations that His words ("this is my body", "this is my blood") are not mere symbols, but evidence of His real presence in the Eucharist. Divine wisdom has ensured that these Eucharistic miracles have strengthened the faith of ordinary people and those acting *in persona Christi*, i.e. priests, over the centuries. We are reminded of this above all by the events surrounding the miracles of Lanciano (8th century) and Bolsena (1263), the latter of which led to the institution of the solemnity of *Corpus Domini* under Urban IV a year later.

The miracle in Vilakkannur is one of many Eucharistic miracles that have occurred in recent times. The most notable of these are the three that took place in Buenos Aires in the 1990s (1992, 1994 and 1996), the one in Tixtla, Mexico, in 2006 and the ones in the Polish cities of Sokółka and Legnica in 2008 and 2013 respectively. These

miracles are documented in Franco Serafini's book *Un cardiologo visita Gesù* (A cardiologist visits Jesus). *I miracoli eucaristici alla prova della scienza* (Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2018).

When the Catholic Church recognise a miracle, it follows a rigorous procedure involving the proper custody of the Eucharist which was the subject of the miracle, and the establishment of an investigative commission by the bishop to evaluate the theological and scientific aspects (see the latest *Norms* of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith for discerning alleged supernatural phenomena). In most cases, the miracle involved the Host bleeding. Every time the Eucharistic samples were analysed, the blood type was always AB (the same type that emerged from tests on the Shroud of Turin).

In the case of Vilakkannur, Father Pathickal, the parish priest of Christ the King Church at the time, explained to *Matters India* that, at the moment of elevation, he had noticed a stain on the newly consecrated Host: "It became larger and brighter and a face appeared soon". The priest therefore decided to set that Particle aside and continue the Mass with another Host kept in the tabernacle. At the end of the celebration, he showed the miraculous Host to the sacristan, who said that it was the face of Jesus. Father Pathickal then placed the Host in a monstrance and displayed it on the altar for the adoration of the faithful. Following the instructions of the Archbishop of Tellicherry at the time, Monsignor George Valiamattam, he placed the Host back in the tabernacle at around 11 a.m. on 15 November 2013.

As news of the miracle spread, thousands of people flocked to the village of Vilakkannur. The crowd of people and vehicles was so huge that it blocked the road to Paithalmalan, a tourist resort, requiring the intervention of senior police officials.

The archdiocese took custody of the Host and investigated the incident from scientific and theological perspectives. From September 2018 to January 2020, the Particle was returned to the Church of Christ the King in Vilakkannur for public adoration. It was then handed over to the apostolic nuncio at the time, Giambattista Diquattro.

What followed is breaking news: the Holy See recognised the miracle, as announced by Monsignor Joseph Pamplany on 9 May, just one day after the election of Leo XIV.