

ITALY

How Bishop Ghizzoni of Ravenna covered up a Eucharistic miracle

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Reluctance, lack of transparency, cover-ups. The way the Bishop of Ravenna, Lorenzo Ghizzoni, dealt with the probable Eucharistic miracle of Savarna was more like the negligence of a bureaucrat than the scrupulous zeal of a pastor. The results of the

criminal proceedings opened in court on the complaint of some of the faithful are disturbing and see the Bishop of Ravenna accused (the accusation is currently against unknown persons) of a serious crime, 404 cp (destruction of objects of worship under Italian law).

Yesterday, the faithful presented to the investigating magistrate of Ravenna an act of opposition to the request for dismissal that the Public Prosecutor's Office had already prepared on the matter, without taking into account the chain of errors and cover-ups that were put in place to hide what could have been a Eucharistic miracle.

Readers will remember the story of January 2023: the consecrated host found after Mass in the first pews of the church of Savarna in the diocese of Ravenna-Cervia, the preservation of the host and then, after a few days, the appearance of a reddish material which, when subsequently analysed in the laboratory of the anatomopathologist Cristina Antonini in Schio, showed traces of granulocytes and traces of blood.

And then the second half of this absurd story with the delivery of the slides and the jar with the decomposed host to the Bishop and the investigations carried out by Ghizzoni with the complicity of the local ASL (Local Health Authority), which instead showed, but without any proof, that there were no traces of blood. Finally, the disappearance of the stabilised slides (available for further examination) and the destruction of the contents of the jar given to the LHA. As if that weren't enough, the LHA communicated the negative results to the bishop via WhatsApp.

Any thriller worth its salt has fewer chapters and fewer twists. But what enriches the mystery of Savarna this time is what the lawyer representing the faithful, Francesco Minutillo, has managed to reconstruct after the investigations entrusted to the Carabinieri of Ravenna.

Starting from the fact that the disposal of the host remains in the organic waste bin was confirmed by Vittorio Sambri, the director of the LHA laboratory in Pievestina, to the fact that the analyses carried out by the LHA were not aimed at looking for human blood, as Dr Antonini's did, but for bacteria, and that the result was never officially reported, as should be the case with any kind of laboratory test, but was simply communicated to the Bishop via WhatsApp, without documentation and therefore without any evidence.

And that's not all: in the proceedings, which the examining magistrate will now have to decide whether to continue with further investigations, the WhatsApp messages and

exchanges between Ghizzoni and Sambri will also emerge, revealing the astonishing carelessness with which the bishop, as the legal representative, dealt with a probable Eucharistic miracle in his diocese.

The first of these messages dates back to October 2023, when the two men spoke to each other to agree on the tests to be carried out on the samples taken. After receiving a negative answer, Ghizzoni asked Sambri what had happened to the host that had been analysed. 'I am deeply grateful,' Ghizzoni writes to the LHA technician. 'If they ask me about the jar, did you keep it? Otherwise, no problem, thank you all the same'. A disturbing question, both for its appropriateness and its carelessness, given that the speaker is a bishop and the object in question is a consecrated host. But equally disturbing is Sambri's reply: 'I'll check if we have it and let you know', as if material available for an analysis that has just been carried out is to be sought in the back of some bottom drawer.

In reality, Sambri's 'wait and see' response is related to the fact that the material had been completely destroyed and disposed of in the organic waste. In fact, in a later communication dated 18 June 2024, after the probable miracle had already been reported and the *Daily Compass* had already written the first articles, Sambri again contacted the bishop: 'Good morning, Your Excellency, I was very disappointed to read the news in today's press. Apparently the story has leaked and the local health authority is accused of having made the material disappear, which as you know was entirely consumed for the laboratory tests. I would ask you to issue a denial to the press that does not accuse us of something that we both know is covered by a confidentiality agreement'.

So the jealously guarded host was thrown away, while the local health authority hid behind a confidentiality agreement that we had already heard about from Sambri himself, who told the *Daily Compass* when we met him.

This agreement," said Minutillo, "was made outside any official procedure and without any administrative traceability, which meant that the management of the results lacked transparency and was in fact removed from any form of public control. The secret agreement prevented the analysis and destruction of the Eucharistic materials from being recorded, in violation of the principles of legality and impartiality to which public administration is bound".

For Ghizzoni, this undoubtedly casts a dark shadow over his career as archbishop. The revelation that he led the investigation into a possible Eucharistic miracle more to destroy the evidence than to analyse it seriously is certainly not a good

calling card for a pastor like himself, who has always tried to climb to the top of the Italian Bishops' Conference with prestigious assignments and appointments.

Instead what emerges is the behaviour of a bishop obsessed by the ideological fantasies of his faithful. In a subsequent communication with Sambri, he accused one of the authors of the report and the lawyer Minutillo in particular of seeking publicity and belonging to a particular ideological camp, and did not hide his irritation at what had happened. Obviously forgetting that the Savarna affair began long before any complaints emerged, involving one of his priests and his sacristan grappling with something miraculous, namely that of a host which colours deep red which the bishop then tried in vain to define as unconsecrated, something impossible since the place and time of discovery made the presence of an unconsecrated particle impossible.

Now it's the judge's turn, but the faithful continue to insist. If the jar containing the remains of the consecrated host was thrown away, what happened to the three slides analysed by Dr Antonini (in the photo), which showed the presence of blood? The parish priest of Savarna gave them to the bishop, but Ghizzoni did not give those to the LHA for further analysis, nor did he ever explain what happened to them.

If they are still in his possession, why doesn't he take them out and allow other scientists to analyse them and continue the investigation? Or perhaps he threw them away, not caring that the material had been stabilised by Dr Antonini's treatment and could therefore have been made available to someone else to determine whether what was left of this host was indeed human blood?