

ITALY

Ravenna: faithful file law suit demanding truth about Eucharistic miracle

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The affair of the probable Eucharistic miracle of Savarna, then concealed by the Diocese of Ravenna, has now reached the Public Prosecutor's Office. This is the clamorous development of an affair that has never been clarified and that still has many obscure

aspects, after some faithful members of the parish of Ravenna went to court to find out the truth about the disappearance of those tissue samples of a consecrated host that had already been analysed and from which an initial laboratory test showed traces of blood. But nothing more has been heard of the samples and the rest of the host after the diocese asked the local health authority to carry out investigations. Investigations which, according to the diocese, would have given negative results, although nothing was ever revealed of the details of these investigations.

Consequently, members of the faithful instructed the lawyer Francesco

Minutillo (of the Forlì Bar) to file a complaint for "insulting the Catholic religion by denigrating or damaging sacred objects", a very specific offence governed by article 404, paragraph II of the penal code.

As reported, the particle was found on 24 January 2023 between the pews after Mass; it was collected by the sacristan and placed in the "purificino", as prescribed by canonical norms, and then kept in the shrine. On 28 January, however, the particle turned reddish and, instead of decomposing, showed signs that were considered miraculous. The parish priest, Don Nicolò Giosuè, decided to preserve it in a convent in the area, but after some time, since it showed no signs of decomposition, he took it to Schio to the laboratory of Dr Cristina Antonini, an anatomist-pathologist who carried out the first tests and said she had found traces of blood.

What's more, after stabilising the sample, so that it could be used for subsequent analyses, her report found traces of granulocytes, red blood cells and white blood cells in a condition considered exceptional. The tissues also showed no signs of autolysis or hydropic degeneration, phenomena normally expected from immersion in water.

Subsequently, the Bishop of Ravenna, Lorenzo Ghizzoni, sent all the material, both the remaining part of the Ostia and the sample of it, stabilised and already analysed, in which blood had been found, to the Pievestestina laboratory for further analysis, which was entrusted to the local health authority of Romagna. The tests ruled out the presence of human blood, but the result was communicated to the Bishop by an informal message via WhatsApp and the samples were destroyed, as reported by *La Bussola* (whose articles are included in the complaint), according to a **confidentiality agreement between the Archbishop and the head of the laboratory**.

The complaint raises the hypothesis that such actions could constitute the offence of insulting or damaging objects of worship, provided for in article 404 of the Penal Code.

The complaint filed," explains Minutillo, "highlights some possible irregularities in the

handling of the case of the alleged Eucharistic miracle of Savarna by Archbishop Lorenzo Ghizzoni. If the destruction or dispersal of a consecrated host and related biological samples were confirmed, this would be a serious episode, possibly amounting to the defamation of an object of worship central to Catholic doctrine. Other aspects worthy of investigation relate to the handling of the samples by the health authorities of Romagna, in the person of Professor Vittorio Sambri. If the destruction of the artefacts had indeed taken place without adequate documentation or supervision, this could indicate a violation of the transparency and traceability protocols expected in a case of such importance".

But the lack of clarity does not end there. It also remains to be clarified," the lawyer concludes, "whether the use of a simple WhatsApp message to communicate the result of the analysis and the subsequent destruction of the samples can be considered in accordance with institutional procedures. The hypothetical absence of any official communication or formal report has led us to raise a number of doubts about the correctness of the process'.

It is crucial to understand the details of this confidentiality agreement between the diocese and the local health authorities, "which may have limited transparency in an affair that is of interest not only to the faithful but to the entire public, given that it was a public body that carried out the analyses. We will not stop until we know what happened to the biological samples of the Eucharist. We have demanded that any remaining residue be confiscated immediately. Strictly speaking, according to legal logic, these are objects of worship (the real presence of Jesus Christ, because they come from a consecrated host that was carelessly dropped after communion, ed.), central symbols of the Catholic faith, which as such must be treated with respect and certainly not as material to be disposed of without transparency and respect".