



Boston Catholic Journal

www.boston-catholic-journal.com
editor@boston-catholic-journal.com

THE MOST HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS:

A Primer for Clueless Catholics

Part VII

A Matter of Proximity

Not very long ago, hundreds of people flocked to see what appeared to be an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary ... in the condensation that had occurred upon a window at a local hospital. Some came from great distances. Many came as long as the image appeared, and, being interviewed on local television news, express no doubt about the authentic source of such a thing as they continue to marvel at the image, pondering its significance. In yet another instance, a tree growing somewhere in the Southern United States had resembled the profile of Our Blessed Lord, and thousands came to gaze upon the tree.

In a similar way, people, many thousands, have gone, and continue to go, to Medjugorje, to a place where Mary has appeared, it is said ... for the past 24 years (about 8000 times) ... to a group of (then) young people in 1981 and conversed with them, and still does. They have gone in the hopes of seeing their Rosaries turn to gold, or to witness some other inexplicable phenomena that will, for them, validate their faith, or enable them to return home with some account of the miraculous that they have witnessed, having been invited, as it were, into an inner circle of the privileged and the elect to whom such extraordinary graces are given, graces that are not dispensed to the many.

This is not to say that some good has not come from condensation on glass, or the shape of a tree, or a Rosary appearing to turn to gold for a moment or two. To my understanding, no one has brought back a Rosary that has remained gold; the condensation has evaporated, and the tree has acquired new branches and leaves and now resembles something quite different and more akin to ... well ... a tree.

We flock to the miraculous and the extraordinary, not **because** we believe in miracles, but I think because **we do not** and *wish to* (although as Catholics, we *must*). We want the evidence. Like King Herod, before whom Christ was brought on the night of His Passion, we demand a miracle. Hard copy. Proof – which, of course, would make faith unnecessary. We needn't have faith in something proven to us. We do not have faith in gravity. We do not need it. A banana peel

suffices to remind us. The Apostle Thomas wanted proof and got it. But at the price of a lesser blessing.

What has this to do with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

Consider this – not *ex hypothesi*, but as an actual event: You are sitting at home when a neighbor bursts into the door and breathlessly exclaims that Jesus Christ has just appeared down the street – and He is still there!!! You look up in amazement, incredulous before your neighbor. In a trice you grab the keys to your car and speed off down the street, heedless of all else, hoping to get where you will find Jesus Christ Himself!!! You've left the water boiling for your tea, the door open, and the television still on ... in fact, you realize as you are speeding along that you've even forgotten to put on your shoes! Who cares?! If this is real, you would have fled your house naked grabbing a towel on the way.

You come to where your friend had told you that Jesus is – and there is nothing and no one.

You are furious! You speed back even more quickly to scold your erstwhile friend for sending you on a wild goose chase. He is still back at your house, standing in the driveway. Barely able to restrain yourself from parking precisely where he is standing, you fling open the door to your car and jump out, full of indignation!

Your friend is astonished. "He was there when I left", he cries. "Are you certain that you went to the right place?"

He hops in your car and back you go. Then, coming to the Church, he tells you to stop! "Come along!", he urges you, impatiently. You get out and follow him through the door of the Church, barely able to keep pace with your friend, and then, at the end of the aisle, before the Tabernacle, he stops.

You look around. The Church is empty.

You look at your friend, utterly bewildered ... but he has fallen to the floor on his face in front of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

And you are left standing. Still ... *and still you do not understand.*

Herod believed in miracles too ... or wanted to. Even as the Author of all miracles stood before him.

What we have learned today:

If truly we believe, we would hasten to the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar – where Jesus IS, hidden under the appearances of mere bread. Do not wish to be entertained by miracles. Be satisfied with God Himself.

Part 8: What the Mass is NOT

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