

PADRE PIO'S PILGRIMAGE

by David Reid

Although this report will be kept as brief as possible this Pilgrimage was predominately one of Grace and Prayer and consequently you are expected to read between the lines.

The Pilgrimage corresponds to the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Padre Pio and celebrates his Beatification next spring.

Sunday 18th Oct.

A group of 29 headed by Mrs. Anne Cillis Executive Director of The Padre Pio Institute in Canada, left Ottawa at about 16:00 after attending a beautiful Solemn High Mass celebrated by Fr.Trezza, Fr.Creurer and Fr.Ryan at St.Clement's Church in Ottawa. The jump-off point was the Dorval airport in Montreal.

The Lord of the flies immediately showed his displeasure by hiding a number of airline tickets including that of our Chaplain Fr.Trezza. Much prayer including an intercession to St.Michael finally produced them with only minutes to spare.

As an aside our Chaplain Fr.Trezza was a gift and certainly a good contact for the future. For those who are old enough to know the expression and because he will be reading this report suffice it to say that Fr.Trezza is a Priest's Priest.

Monday 19th Oct.

Arrived at the Fiumicino airport in Rome at 09:15 and left immediately via tour bus for Pietrelcina to visit Padre Pio's birthplace. The town gives the impression of narrow winding streets and small attached houses. Padre Pio's house was no exception with small rooms and a minimum of furniture. The house however breathes of simpler times and a poverty of life and dependence on the Providence of God.

Continued on to San Giovanni Rotondo home to Padre Pio's hospital the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza.

Tuesday 20th Oct.

Visited Monte Sant'Angelo the world's greatest shrine to St. Michael the Archangel. The three apparitions of St. Michael began in the year 490 and ended in 492. The bishop in that year built a Chapel at the entrance to the Grotto and dedicated it on 29th Sept. The Grotto is the only place of cult not consecrated by the hand of man and the title Celestial Basilica was conferred during the centuries. Preserved under the main altar is a footprint left by St. Michael as evidence of his presence, and at the entrance the impression of St. Francis of Assisi's face, in solid rock, where he rested his head not entering the Grotto on account of his unworthiness.

Following this was a guided tour of Padre Pio's Monastery. Highlights included praying before the Crucifix at which he received the Stigmata, viewing the cell in which he lived much of his life and in which he died, seeing the gloves he wore on his hands covering the holes from the nails together with the cloth still covered with blood from the wound in his side and last but not least praying besides his tomb. We were also blessed with his gloves and had our Rosaries touched to it.

As moving as these experiences were nothing could be compared to the Mass celebrated by, our Chaplain, Fr. Trezza at Padre Pio's Monastery Church Santa Maria della Grazie. This was the first time in 30 years that a Latin Tridentine Mass had been celebrated on the Altar and the first time in over much more than 30 years that an oriented Mass had been said since Padre Pio was forced to celebrate the Tridentine Mass versus populum.

There is also a hill next to the hospital where one can make the Stations of the Cross and these are all life size.

Wed. 26th Oct.

Visited Lanciano. For over 12 centuries the greatest Eucharist Miracle of the Catholic Church has been preserved at Lanciano. This Event took place in the 8th century A.D. in the little Church of St. Legontian, as a divine response to a Basilian monk doubt about Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist.

During Holy Mass, after the two-fold consecration, the host was changed into live Flesh and the wine was changed into live Blood, which coagulated into five globules, irregular and differing in shape and size.

Since 1713 the Flesh has been reserved in an artistic silver Ostensorium and the Blood in a very old cup made of rock crystal.

Recent scientific analysis in the 70's and 80's has revealed that:

- The Flesh is real Flesh. The Blood is real Blood;
- The Flesh and Blood belong to the human species;
- The flesh consists of the muscular tissue of the heart;
- In the Flesh we see present in sections: the myocardium, the endocardium, the vagus nerve and also the left ventricle of the heart for the large thickness of the myocardium;
- The Flesh is a "HEART" complete in its essential structure;
- The Flesh and the Blood have the same blood-type: AB;
- In the Blood there were found proteins in the same normal proportions (percentage-wise) as are found in the sero-proteic make-up of the fresh normal blood;
- In the Blood there were also found these minerals: chlorides, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, sodium and calcium;
- The preservation of the Flesh and of the Blood, which were left in their natural state for twelve centuries and exposed to the action of atmospheric and biological agents, remains an extraordinary phenomenon.

No words are capable of describing kneeling and praying before the Body and Blood of Our Lord where the eyes of Faith are not required, and where the physical accidents of bread and wine have been completely removed.

Visited the Holy House of Loreto. The holiest Shrine on the face of the earth. 'Who is she, that cometh forth as the morning raising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set forth in battle array'.

The Shrine of the Incarnation.

"The Holy House of Loreto is not an 'icon' of abstract truth, but an event and a mystery: the Incarnation of the Word. It is with deep emotion that, when entering the revered chapel, one reads the words above the altar 'Hic verbum caro factum est'".
(Pope John Paul II)

The Shrine of the Holy Spirit.

The mystery of the Incarnation of the Word in Mary's womb took place through the power of the Holy Spirit. *Angulus Domini nuntiavit Mariae et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.*

Shrine of the Immaculate Virgin.

The Popes since the time of Julius II (1507) have always considered the Holy House of Loreto to be the place 'where the Blessed Virgin was conceived, brought up and where she received the Annunciation.'

Within these humble walls, the Divine Promise, made to man immediately after original sin, was carried out: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3,15)

The Shrine of the Hidden Life of Jesus.

The example of the hidden life of Jesus in the House of Nazareth provides an invitation to Christians to reflect on the primary importance of prayer and humility. With renewed compunction of heart, they feel the interior need to repeat the prayer that Jesus Himself taught us in order that we might also pray for the spirit of contemplation and recollection.

Shrine of the Family.

"The house of the Holy Family! It was the first temple, the first Church, on which the Mother of God shed her light through her motherhood. She irradiated it with the light which comes from the great mystery of the Incarnation; from the mystery of her Son". (Pope John Paul II)

The Shrine of Sanctified Work.

In the House of Nazareth, work becomes a sign of redemption and is made holy; it is the work of the Son of God, Mary and Joseph. Looking at the Holy Family, all those who work understand their mission in the world; the prolonging in time of God's creation.

The Shrine of the House of Consent.

The Word, becoming man in Mary's womb said to the Father: "Behold, I come to do Thy Will, Oh God." (Heb. 10,7)

To the Angel's word announcing her divine motherhood Mary replied 'Fiat' "Ecce ancilla Domini fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." (Luk. 1,38)

Joseph gave his consent, after his dream: "And Joseph, rising up from sleep did as the Angel of the Lord commanded him and took unto him his wife" (Math. 1,24)

The Shrine of Reconciliation.

Sometimes the Holy House is called 'The Ark of the New Alliance'. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus established a new and eternal alliance between God and man. He reconciled him to His Father at the price of His Blood.

Shrine of the House of the Sick.

The traditional iconograph represents St. Joseph in pain and dying in the Holy House. These venerated walls have born witness to pain, illness and death.

The walls of the Holy House are encased in marble. The work was ordered by Pope Julius II (1507).

We said a Latin Tridentine Mass in a side Chapel but that is another story that can only be told verbally.

Thursday 27th Oct.

Visited the Cathedral of Orvieto. In 1263/64 a Bohemian priest – a certain Peter of Praga – who did not believe in the transubstantiation of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Host and Wine, went on a pilgrimage to Rome to ask on St. Peter's tomb that his faith might be strengthened. On his way back from Rome, he stopped in Bolsena, where, while he was saying Mass in the Crypt of St. Christine, he saw blood come out of the Host, so much so that the Corporal got completely covered. Pope Urban IV, who was in Orvieto at that time ordered the sacred cloth to be brought there. Later he introduced the feast of Corpus Domini for the entire Christian world. While I was there the Corporal was on display with simultaneous exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Again Father was able to say a Tridentine Mass in this Church.

Visited Assisi. The Basilica di San Francesco has withstood severe damage from the earthquake and a large portion of it is enclosed with scaffolding and cannot be visited. We were able to visit and pray at the tomb of St. Francis. One amazing sight is a statue

of St.Francis with cupped hands and in them nested a pure white dove. Another dove is perched nearby waiting to his place as soon as the one in St.Francis hands leaves.

At the Patriarchal Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli we saw St.Francis little Church of the Porziuncola, and the Cappella del Transito in which St.Francis died.

Friday 23rd Oct.

At the Basilica of St.Claire, in the Chapel of the Crucifix, we were able to see the Crucifix of St.Damian, which spoke to St.Francis exhorting him to repair the Church. Also visited the sepulchre of St.Claire.

Afterwards we again visited the Basilica and said the Tridentine Mass of St.Francis. It was uplifting to see other pilgrims receiving Communion from Father kneeling and on the tongue, and the guards doffing their hats at the Consecration and the final blessing.

After leaving Assisi we traveled on to Siena where we visited the beautiful Cathedral of Santa Maria. We were able to view the head of St.Catherine.

Ecclesia Dei

The Ecclesia Dei events began Friday night and lasted until Monday and these are covered in the Newsletter.

Tuesday to Thursday 27th to 29th Oct.

Celebrated two Tridentine Masses at the Church of St.Clement under whose Altar are visible the relics of Ss.Cosmos and Damian.

Visited St.Peter's, the four Major Basilicas in Rome, the Catacombs of St.Callixtus. Kissed the imprint of Christ's feet, which are imbedded almost half an inch deep in marble at the Church of Quo Vadis. Was able to navigate on my knees the stairs of Pontius Pilate, which Christ climbed. Finished off Thursday with a 6 hour exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in St.Peter's followed by Benediction in the Latin Rite.

Our thanks go out to Anne Cillis who put the Pilgrimage together, to Fr.Trezza our wonderful and courageous Chaplain and to all those who made it such a memorable occasion.