

ENCOURAGEMENT

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From The Host Apostolate - September 2011

Sister Briega and The Eucharistic Miracle

Today Sister Briega McKenna's healing ministry is totally centered on the Eucharist. During a special retreat for Sisters a few years ago, she shared a remarkable story of how Jesus led her to this Eucharistic centering.

Three weeks after returning from America she got a phone call from Fr. Rick Thomas. He had a special ministry across the border in Mexico. He said to her, "I would love to have you come and visit the poor at the garbage dump and pray with them. You can help with the healings. Their need is so great."

She explained that given her existing commitments, she had only an evening and a morning available, and he responded, "That's fine. God doesn't need a long time. On your way back from California, stop off and stay over night."

She arrived in El Paso to be met by this very colourful charismatic priest, a man who witnessed to the faith in everything he did.

When they arrived at the dump, Sr. Briega witnessed scenes she will never forget. On the Texan border with Mexico, there is the Rio Grande, the river which Mexicans try to cross to get into the U.S. They are driven back by border police. These are poor Mexicans, who squat and live at the garbage dump, and their children, are born there.

As Fr. Rick showed Sr. Briega around, she was horrified by the sheer squalor. She had given retreats in South America, but she had never seen anything like this.

When Fr. Rick told her that he was going to celebrate Mass there for them the next morning, she was somewhat taken aback, wondering how Mass could be celebrated with any dignity in such an environment. What would the people know or understand?

The children were running around wild like little animals. She was horrified at thinking that, in that place with those people; they will not be able to comprehend what happens during Mass. Anyway, the next morning, she, a small group of young Mexican Americans, and Fr. Rick set out for the dump. He brought a little table and all the Mass requirements.

When they arrived, already up to 1000 people were there, and more were coming!

She remembered standing there looking over this crowd of poor miserable people. Clearly visible in the distance, not even fifteen minutes away, were beautiful homes and a big Mexican Seminary. But these people had no church, and indeed, they had nothing. Fr. Rick had taken it upon himself to go out there and to begin evangelizing and ministering to them. He was trying to break down the hatred through speaking of God's love, and then seeking to get them into groups to do works toward that end.

The Mass started, and although Sr. Briega has been a daily communicant since she was



12 years old, she said that that Mass had changed her life! Before the Mass began, she watched an old woman coming in, carrying a bundle on her shoulder. At first, Sr. Briege thought that it was some form of a gift for Fr. Rick.

But, when the old woman opened up the cloth, in it there was a little child, completely burned from head to foot, filthy dirty, and screaming!

The woman looked at Fr. Rick, and with great compassion, she said, "Please bless him. I found him smouldering when I was coming across the mountain." She had picked him up, put him into this cloth, and carried him to Fr. Rick.

The child was practically skinless! Fr. Rick looked at the little boy, got Sr. Briege to join with him in a prayer, and then suggested that he be placed under the table on which the Mass was to be celebrated. Sr. Briege related that once the Mass had begun, she felt and saw the presence of Jesus. When Fr. Rick said, "Let us say the Gloria," praises to God came forth from the tops of their voices.

She had come from across the border from comfort. She had everything that she needed, but they had nothing, and yet they praised God loudly and wholeheartedly. She heard the Lord speaking to her, saying, "If my people do not praise Me, the stones will cry out!"

Here were the poorest of the poor and they were radiant with praise to God. When the consecration came, she had her head down. Then she looked up and saw that Fr. Rick had one of those large hosts. For a moment, everybody was prostrate on the ground. It was then that she had the most beautiful image of Jesus with His two hands out. He was smiling, and within herself, she heard the words of the Gospel, "Come to Me all you who are weary, and I will refresh you."



*"God dwells in our midst,
in the Blessed Sacrament
of the Altar."*

St. Maximilian Kolbe

At that moment, she truly knew that Jesus was in the Host... that it is not just a piece of bread, but truly Jesus, Himself. For these people, in the midst of their poverty, they had the King of Kings. They clapped, cheered, and cried, "Viva Cristo Rei" ...long live Christ the King!

Mass ended and the burned little boy, who had been placed under the Mass table, had long since stopped crying. Sr. Briege went to look for him, and she was overwhelmed when she saw him. He had crawled out from under the table, was totally healed, and was playing in the sand!

She went over to the old woman, and said to her, "What happened to him?" With hindsight, she realized that it was a stupid question. The old woman looked at Sr. Briege, and said, "What do you mean what happened? Didn't Jesus come?"

As Fr. Rick put his hands over the bread and wine and called upon the Holy Spirit, as the bread and wine were changed, the little boy was changed. He was given new skin!

Taken from Da Mihi Animas 2010

*Remember to pray the Rosary in October
and perhaps offer it for our Priests
without whom there is no Eucharist.*

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