



Eucharistic Miracle

in the Life of Martha Robin

Martha Robin (1902-1981) was one of the greatest mystics and stigmatists of the twentieth century. Every Friday she experienced the drama of Christ's passion and death. On her body she bore the bloody marks of Our Savior's wounds. But what people and the world of science found most astounding was that for 50 years Martha Robin consumed no food apart from the body of Christ in the Eucharist.

Childhood

Martha Robin was born on March 13, 1902, in Chateauneuf-de-Galaure, France, in the small village of Drome in the Rhone Valley. She was baptized in the parish church of Saint-Bonnet. She had five older siblings: four sisters and a brother. Her parents ran a farm. Martha's father was a solid, hard-working man of the soil. Her mother was a pious, joy-filled woman.

In 1903, their entire district was stricken by a deadly outbreak of typhus. Little Martha came down with the disease. Although she recovered,

her general health remained severely affected. Since the state of her health caused her to miss so much school, the parish priest had to visit her at home in order to prepare her for her First Communion. August 15, 1912 was the great day, the day when for the first time in her life she received the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. Years later, she would say, *I think that from the moment of my First Holy Communion, the Lord took me for His own. Jesus' heart began beating inside my heart.*

Martha had an extraordinary memory. She learned quickly and

applied herself to study. Unfortunately, her schooling ended when she turned 14. Her parents needed her to work on the farm. She was a serene and happy child, loved flowers, and enjoyed kitchen-work and gardening. She also loved to sing and take part in evening folk dances.

Progressive paralysis

In May of 1918, at the age of 16, Martha began suffering from painful headaches. On November 25 of the same year, she collapsed on the kitchen floor in the presence of her mother. For 20 months she remained in a coma. Unable to determine the illness, the doctors could offer no help. Martha's parents feared she would soon die. What no one realized, however, was that this was a "mystical sleep," and that it was Jesus preparing her spiritually for His great errand of manifesting His love and boundless mercy. One day, to everyone's amazement and joy, Martha woke up and picked up the



conversation at the exact point where she had left off upon collapsing 20 months earlier. From then on, Martha could get about only with the use of crutches. Meanwhile, her illness grew progressively worse. **The girl became convinced that her main goal in life was to suffer for others. From Our Blessed Mother she learned how to place unbounded trust in Jesus. She had but one desire: to carry out God's will to the very end.**

On October 15, 1925, on the feast day of St. Teresa of Avila, Martha composed an act of consecration in which she offered her life as an exclusive sacrifice to God. It was her own private act of consecration, a pledge of her betrothal to Christ, a giving of herself to Him as His "loving victim." It was also a most moving love letter. *O Lord, my God she wrote, You have asked everything of Your little servant. Therefore, take everything.... O Beloved of my soul! I desire only You. I renounce everything in return for Your love.... God of Love! Take my memory and all its contents. Take my reason and make it serve only Your greater glory... Take all of my will.... Take my body and all its senses, my mind and all its abilities, my heart and all its feelings.... O God of my soul! O Divine Son! I love You... Hide me within Your depths.... Take me with you. I wish to live in You alone.*

Many mystics, after betrothing themselves to Christ, claim to receive a mystical gold ring as a sign from the Lord. Martha tells us that she saw hers on her heart's finger 12 times.

After her act of consecration to Jesus, Martha began to experience strange things. On October 3, 1926, while meditating on the life of St. Theresa of Lisieux, the 24-year-old girl fell into a mystical slumber that lasted three weeks. Upon awaking, she told her parents that throughout all this time she had experienced intense suffering. Paradoxically, it was also an ecstatic experience of God's love. *When we suffer, she said, it is a school of love, that we may love the more.* In her sleep the invalid had been visited three times by St. Theresa of Lisieux, who urged her to accept the mission of lighting *fires of love* throughout the world.

The paralysis of Martha's legs progressed to the point that she could

no longer move unaided. On January 2, 1929, her illness spread to her arms, shoulders and throat. **From then on, unable to swallow, she could neither eat nor drink.** She was confined to her bed, where she would remain until her death on February 6, 1981.

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Two physicians cared for Martha Robin: Dr. Jan Dechaume, a professor at the Faculty of Medicine in Lyons, and Dr. André Ricard. Their report on Martha's condition, dated February 2, 1929, states that around noon of February 2, 1929, their patient lost all control of her legs and arms. She also lost the ability to swallow. She could take neither food nor drink; what is more, she no longer slept. **Martha's ability to live without food was a complete mystery.** Specialists ruled out emotional, psychic or mental states as possible causes of the young woman's paralysis. Nervous disorders, brain tumors, and epilepsy were also ruled out. The causes of Martha's illness remained an insoluble mystery to medical science.

Intrigued by Martha Robin's case, atheist philosopher and physician Paul Louis Chouchoud decided to

pay her a visit. He wished to see for himself if what people said about her and her mystical life was true. Only after considerable difficulty, and thanks largely to the intervention of the local bishop, was he able to meet Martha. A spiritual bond soon developed between the doctor and patient. Chouchoud became a regular guest at Martha's home. He confirmed that Martha Robin suffered from paralysis of the entire body and that her throat muscles were so severely blocked that she was unable to swallow even a drop of water. **What was most astounding, he stated in his medical report, was the manner in which Martha received Holy Communion. She did not swallow the Host; her paralyzed throat muscles made this impossible.** ☞

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Martha Robin





Instead, in some mysterious way, the Host passed through her closed lips and in through her larynx.

Martha attached no importance to this perpetual fast that Jesus had imposed upon her. She ate and drank nothing because her total immobilization due to paralysis made this a physical impossibility. For fifty years no earthly food passed her lips; but she could not live without the Eucharist.

For Martha, receiving the Eucharist was the most important event of her life - her only means of staying alive. She received Communion once a week, on Tuesdays. In her final years, she received it on Wednesday evenings. The day she took Communion, she would pray from the early morning hours and repeat the words of her loving act of consecration to Christ - the prayer she had composed in October 15, 1925. She would also make a sacramental confession. On receiving Holy Communion, she would utter a silent cry of joy, then sink into a state of ecstasy. This ecstasy was a state of total merging with God. During these moments her face would shine with unearthly happiness and beauty. She expressed this in prayer: *O my Beloved, I am so happy. I feel my heart beating in Yours. I feel You within my heart alive and all powerful. The Lord within me - what a mystery! It is as though I were*

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in Paradise. One day I shall die feeling You, O my Jesus, beating within my heart. O my Jesus, grant that it be said one day that Your love consumed me in its flames; not, however, as a result of my efforts, but rather on account of Your grace... O my God, if You grant me such peace even now, if you make me so happy on this earth, how, then, will it be in Heaven?

Mystics who experience states of ecstasy enjoy direct contact with the reality of God Himself. They lose touch with the physical world. But as Martha explained, her soul did not "leave the body" during those mystical states; it was rather a matter of her soul being "lifted up." *God first reveals Himself through a sense of fear and awe. It is something so new, one has no words for it! Then I begin to feel a sense of peace. It is a state that transcends time. I do not know exactly when this takes place. I cannot express it....It takes place at once beyond and within me. I am lifted up. Any attempt to resist is useless. I am lifted up in love. And yet there is nothing coercive about this.*

Martha's ecstasy would continue until the following day, when she would return to her normal state. It is important to note, however, that it was the life of faith, a personal relationship with Jesus, and not extraordinary states of mind and experiences, that Martha valued most highly. Like St. John of the Cross, she held that we ought not to desire extraordinary spiritual experiences, since the desert of the soul, the dark night of faith, was our most precious gift to God. It is by faith that we walk the way of the cross with Jesus, that we grow in love, and gain heaven. Only when Jesus in the Eucharist becomes our central spiritual food can we walk that way.

When I receive Holy Communion, Martha observed, it is as if a living person were entering me... My lips become moist, but I am unable to swallow anything. I absorb the Host, but I have no idea how. The Eucharist is not normal food. Every time I receive it, new life pours into me. Jesus enters my entire body as if I were rising from the dead. Holy Communion is more than union: it is a merging into oneness. When people keep asking me if it is true that I do not eat anything, I feel like shouting to them that I eat more than they, since I feed on the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus. I feel like telling them that it is they that block the effects of this food in themselves.

People, especially the scientific community, find it astounding that from the moment of her total paralysis in 1929 until her death in February of 1981, i.e. for over 50 years, Martha should have eaten and drunk absolutely nothing (and not slept either); and yet, despite this, that her organism should have functioned perfectly normally. The Eucharist was her only source of nourishment. By this extraordinary sign, this permanent Eucharistic miracle, Jesus intended to show us the immense power of the Eucharist when it is received with deep faith.

Through Martha Robin's example, God reminds us that we gain real life only when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Through this spectacular miracle, Jesus wants to lead all of us to a fervent belief in the Eucharist, to the realization that Communion is Christ in His risen



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and glorified humanity. He gives all of Himself, that we may share in the fullness of life with Him: *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day* (Jn 6:53-54).

Suffering with Christ

Martha understood that when she united herself in love with Christ, she would have to participate in His suffering and wage a spiritual war with the powers of darkness. In October of 1927 she experienced her first attack by a demon. He appeared to her as a terrifying beast. Later, evil spirits appearing in human form would shake and toss her about on her bed and slap her face.

In 1930, Martha received the gift of the stigmata. While praying one day she saw something that was very hard to describe. Something like a “fiery arrow” seemed to shoot “like a blade of light” out of Christ’s heart. Here is how the mystic described the experience: *Jesus first asked me to put out my hands. Then the tip of an arrow seemed to come out of His Heart and separate into two beams of light. Each beam pierced one of my hands. Yet it also seemed as if my hands had been pierced from the inside. Jesus then urged me to offer Him my feet. This I did without hesitation. Again I saw the tip of an arrow. It also separated into two parts, and pierced my feet. All this seemed to happen in an instant. Jesus then asked me to offer Him my breast and heart....They too were pierced, with even greater violence....Jesus also offered me His crown of thorns. He placed it on*



John Paul II with Fr. Finet – M. Robin's spiritual director, October 1986

my head and pressed down hard upon it.

From then on, Martha’s body bore the wounds of Jesus crucified. They bled profusely, as her parents were to see with their own eyes. Where did such great quantities of blood come from? Considering Martha took no food, each such loss of blood - amounting to several liters at a time - should have resulted in instant death. The doctors were at a complete loss to explain these mysterious phenomena.

In her dictated letter, dated December 30, 1930, Martha stated: *This year my soul was intimately united with God. I have undergone deep and mysterious changes. Despite my wounds, my happiness is deep and enduring, for*

these wounds are of God. What effort! What an arduous climb! Such agony of the will in order that I might die to myself!

Martha’s doctors state in their report that in October of 1931 Martha began regularly to suffer the Lord’s passion. Every Friday, the marks of the Savior’s wounds would appear on her head, hands, feet and side, and bleed profusely. **She experienced the torments and death of Jesus.** This was the appalling physical and spiritual suffering brought on by a sense of one’s total abandonment, when even God the Father seems absent. It is this suffering that Jesus expressed in the words, *My God! My God! Why have* ☞



you abandoned me (Mat 27:46). Such was the ultimate consequence of the sins of the human race that Jesus freely took upon Himself, in order that He might eradicate them and deliver all people from slavery to Satan. Martha suffered with Jesus for the salvation of sinners. Her “compassion” (the word means “suffering with”) with Jesus would culminate in her experience of death on the cross, which occurred every Friday at 3 p.m. After this “death,” Martha would undergo an experience of the Judgment, which all people will undergo one day. After this judgement, she would experience the separation of body and soul and await the resurrection of the dead. On Sunday morning, at the bidding of the priest, Martha would return to her normal state.

In uniting herself with Jesus in the mystery of His passion and crucifixion for the salvation of the world, Martha Robin became a true spiritual genius. Her genius consisted in her profound worldly wisdom and knowledge of the ultimate goal of human life and how to reach it.

Martha was aware of the great struggle between good and evil playing itself out inside our hearts. She understood that sin and living life as though God did not exist was our greatest tragedy. It was clear to her that that by remaining in sin we become Satan’s slaves and liable to eternal damnation.

Martha’s spiritual genius consisted in her participation in the eternally present act of salvation, which Christ performs in His passion, death, and resurrection. **In order to save sinners**

from eternal damnation and turn them from the path to Hell, this crippled woman united herself with Christ in His sacrifice on the cross for the salvation of the world. She offered up her sufferings and prayers for others, took upon herself their sufferings to merit for them the grace of conversion. Her pain was especially intense when she did not experience the presence of God. This sense of being denied closeness to Jesus was “hell” to her. It was an experience of the terrible suffering of sin. Martha united herself with Christ, who for our sake became sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (cf. 2 Cor 5:21).

On Sunday morning, Martha would join in the gladness of Christ’s resurrection, the definitive triumph over Satan, sin and death. She would participate in the drama of our salvation that is made present in every Holy Mass. Thus it is Jesus who says through Martha: *Every Christian life is the Holy Mass and every soul in the world is a ‘host.’ Take all of yourself, without reservation, and offer it to God together with Jesus, the Divine Victim, Who is given up continually for the salvation of the world.*

She led all people to Christ

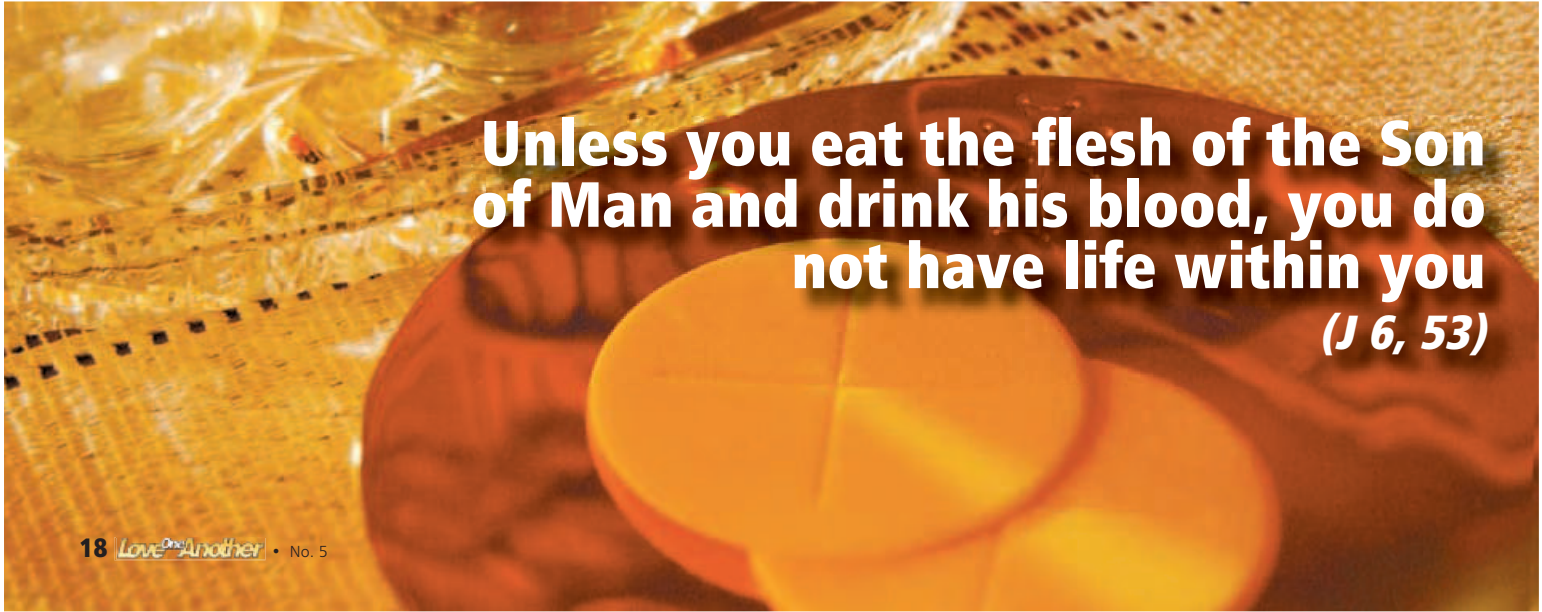
Word of Martha’s strange illness and stigmata spread quickly throughout the country. More and more people began visiting this extraordinary woman to ask her for advice, tips and prayers. Thousands passed through her house. A great many of these were people with important functions in the Church

and state: cardinals, bishops, priests, government ministers, professors, rich employers as well as poor workers, farmers, people given to various addictions, suicidal thoughts, etc. In each instance the invalid would give apt, on-the-spot replies, suggestions and warnings. There was no question to which she could not provide an answer, no problem to which she could not offer a solution, no predicament from which she could not suggest a way out. **To those in despair and pain she would say that she would take the burden of their problems upon herself and, in so doing repay God the debt of their sins.** Thus, for example, after hearing the avowals of a certain prostitute, she agreed to take upon herself the sufferings caused by the woman’s sinful life.

Martha Robin led everyone she met to Christ, the One Who heals all wounds, salves all hurts and solves every problem. Many times a mere word from her lips was enough to change a person’s life. She received sinners with the greatest of compassion. She loved them with a Christ-like love.

Subjected by Satan to the most diverse temptations, she knew the burden of sin better than the worst of sinners. **Through the power of her union with Christ in prayer, the Eucharist and voluntary acceptance of other people’s sufferings, Martha engaged in a constant triumphant struggle with the forces of evil, and in so doing rescued thousands of souls from the prospect of hell.**

Fr. M. Piotrowski, SChr ■



Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you
(J 6, 53)