

## Young Boy Dies Protecting Jesus in the Host

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August 13, 2018

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the courageous witness of this young boy, St. Tarcisius, who did not esteem his life more than Your precious presence in his arms.

I wanted to share this touching story of St. Tarcisius with you, dear Heartdwellers, to illustrate to you that in the third century, when Valerian was Emperor, the community of Christian believers celebrated the Eucharistic service, or Mass, in the Catacombs.

The first communion or the Lord's Supper service was written by St. James and became a norm for worship in Jerusalem during the middle of the first century. That's about 20 years after the Lord was crucified. There are many frescoes in the catacombs depicting the mass, or the Lord's Supper.

Those who met in the Catacombs had no doubts in their hearts that this was the true presence of Jesus under the appearance of bread and wine. And this young man's story illustrates that point so very well.

But before I share this with you, I want to review for just a minute the evidence that supports Peter being the head of the Church in Rome, and being martyred within the same time frame as Paul.

Now, in no way does that mean I'm endorsing the institution of the Roman Catholic Church. I'm not. I'm going back to the first century to show you what the order was like during that time.

By this time in history, the Church had an established hierarchy. Peter had been succeeded by Linus, Anacletus, and St. Clement. Of course, there is great dispute among evangelical scholars that claim Peter was never in Rome. That lasted until recently, when Peter's Tomb was discovered directly below the Vatican complex. Men were digging to lay wires for a sound system and broke through to underground crypts, and that's when Peter's remains were found, proving that he indeed was in Rome and buried there. St. Peter's tomb is near the west end of a complex of mausoleums that date between about AD 130 and AD 300.

Further historical writings from the Early Church by Eusebius of Caesarea relate that when Peter confronts Simon Magus at Judea (Acts 8), Simon Magus flees to Rome, where the Romans got to regard him as a god. According to Eusebius, his luck did not last long, since God sent Peter to Rome and Simon the magician was quenched and immediately destroyed.

In the Scriptures, 1 Peter 5:13, "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus, my son." Now, it's not certain whether this refers to the actual Babylon or to Rome, for which Babylon was a common nickname at the time. Marcus, a very typical Roman name, strengthens the theory that Peter refers to Rome in his letter. In the preceding verse, 1 Peter 5:12, he also mentions Silvanus, another typical Roman name.

Irenaeus of Lyons wrote in the 2nd century that Peter and Paul had been the founders of the Church in Rome and had appointed Linus as succeeding bishop.

Clement of Alexandria A.D. 190, states that "Peter had preached the Word publicly at Rome.

And according to Jerome, "Peter went to Rome in the second year of Claudius to overthrow Simon Magus, and held the sacerdotal chair there for twenty-five years until his martyrdom, that is the fourteenth, year of Nero."

Sacerdotal chair--that means the chair of authority. Like the Lord talked about, the chairs of the scribes and the Pharisees. It's a position of authority. So, that was from Clement of Alexandria in A.D. 190.

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in his Epistle to the Roman Church under Pope Soter A.D. 165 declares that Peter and Paul founded the Church of Rome and the Church of Corinth, and they have lived in Corinth for some time and finally in Italy where they found death.

And this is a quote from that article:

"You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time."

So that's the background on the early Christians in Rome. Here is the touching story of St. Tarcisius, a boy martyr of the Eucharist. And the link to this story is going to be available in the box below.

"Have you any idea what Rome was like at the beginning of the first century? The Romans were the most powerful people in the world because they conquered and ruled over many nations which, together, were known as the Roman Empire. The Roman rulers and their soldiers were very cruel, and they were very much feared both by their own people and the people of other nations.

"When Tarcisius was a young boy, the empire was ruled by Emperor Valerian. He hated Christians because of their love for Jesus and His teachings. They were thrown into dirty prisons where conditions were poor, and many of them were martyred--which means they were put to death for their beliefs.

"How were these Christians martyred? Some of them were beaten to death, others were burned--and most cruel of all--a number of them were thrown into a big arena called the Coliseum (which still exists today) and there they were eaten by lions. This was like a sport to the emperor and his friends who watched this horrible cruelty and enjoyed it. However, the Christians endured all of this, rather than give up their faith in Jesus.

"To avoid being captured, they had to meet secretly in their homes if they wanted to pray and to learn about their faith. When the situation became too dangerous, they built underground rooms and passages called catacombs, so that they could come together in safety. To enable them to celebrate Holy Mass in secret, they had to build large rooms below ground called crypts where they also buried their dead.

"The entrances to the catacombs were concealed and they were usually in isolated spots outside the city, known only to the Christians. These same catacombs still exist today and can be seen by visitors to

Rome.

"It was there they gathered to pray, to study their faith and to hear Mass and receive Holy Communion. This was possible due to the courageous bishops and priests who risked their lives so that the people could receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist.

"No matter how careful the Christians were in protecting the knowledge of the entrances to the catacombs, sometimes the pagans did discover them. Hence, a great number of Christians were caught or put in prison, where, each day, they expected to be put to death. Despite their sufferings they continue to desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

"One day, just as the Bishop was about to celebrate Holy Mass in one of the catacombs, he received a letter from the prisoners--among whom were some of his fellow bishops and priests--requesting him to please send Holy Communion to them. They knew that if Jesus was with them, they would be less fearful and would gladly accept a martyr's death for love of Him. This posed a problem, for the Bishop knew it was very dangerous to take the Holy Eucharist to prisoners and to the sick.

"Before beginning Holy Mass, the Bishop asked the people present to pray that he might choose the best person to carry Jesus in the Eucharist to the prisoners. As it was now too dangerous for priests to do so, it was important that some other good person be selected who would not arouse suspicion.

"As soon as Mass was over, the Bishop asked who would be willing to carry out this brave task. The young boy Tarcisius--an altar server--stood up and said, 'send me.' The Bishop thought the boy was too young and could be endangered, but Tarcisius convinced him that nobody would suspect him, simply because he was so young. All the Christians knew of the deep love Tarcisius had for Jesus in the Eucharist, so the bishop eventually accepted the boy's offer.

"Tarcisius was given some hosts carefully wrapped in a linen cloth and placed in a small case, which he wrapped in his tunic over his heart. The Bishop asked him to remember the heavenly treasures that were being entrusted to his care; to avoid the crowded streets and to faithfully and safely protect these sacred mysteries: Jesus in the Eucharist. Tarcisius replied that he would rather die than let go of them. Claspng his Sacred Treasure, he set off for the prison.

"Oh, how happy and proud Tarcisius felt as he carried Our Blessed Lord so close to his heart! (And this is the fleshing out of the story by a sister of Notre Dame.) He had no thoughts to spare for places or people that he passed. He thought only of Jesus, whom he carried.

"'Oh, dear Jesus, how I love you,' he whispered. 'How good You are to choose me as your little messenger. How willingly I would suffer and die for You, like these good people in prison. Perhaps one day, You will let me lay down my life for you, too.'

"Whispering words of love like these, he sped quickly on his way. He was out of the catacombs now and on the high road. There, he passed a group of his school comrades just about to start a game, but needing one more to complete the number to make up the team. Catching sight of Tarcisius they called him to stop and join them.

"'I am sorry,' he said, 'but I am on an important mission.' He hurried on, but the lads caught hold of him

and would not let him go.

"What have you there?" said one, seeing how tightly Tarcisus held his hands to his breast. 'Let me see.'

'No, no,' cried Tarcisus, struggling to free himself. His anxiety made them all curious, and together they tried to pull away his hands.

"My Jesus, strengthen me,' whispered Tarcisus, almost under his breath. But one boy heard his words and cried out to the others: 'He is a Christian. He is hiding some Christian mystery there.'

"This made the boys still more curious. They determined to see for themselves, so they struck him, stoned him, and kicked him and did their best to pull away his hands, but they could not make him loosen his grip.

"A man passing by asked 'What's going on here?'

"He's a Christian, carrying some Christian mystery, and we're trying to get it from him,' cried one of the boys.

"A Christian, did you say?' said the man, and giving Tarcisus one cruel blow, threw him to the ground.

At this very moment, a soldier, hastening towards the group, scattered them to right and left, and stooping down, lifted Tarcisus in his arms.

"You cowards!" he said; 'all setting on one little lad.' And he strode quickly down the street and hurried off into a quiet lane.

"Tarcisus, lad,' he said, smoothing back the curls from his pale face. Tarcisus opened his eyes and recognized the soldier as a Christian whom he had often met in the catacombs.

"I am dying,' he said, 'but I have kept my God safe from them.' And he handed his precious treasure to the soldier, who placed it reverently inside his tunic. 'Carry Him to the prison for me,' said Tarcisus, and with a gentle sigh he fell back into the soldier's arms.

"His little soul was already with God, for whom he so willingly had given his life, for Jesus himself once said, 'Greater love than this no man has, than that a man lay down his life for his friend.'

Little Tarcisus gave his life for the Friend of friends, Jesus Christ.

Well, that's a beautiful story that really brings home exactly how much the people believed in the true presence of Jesus in the Body and Blood, under the appearance of bread and wine. It's a beautiful story, and just one of many.

And then, of course, there are eucharistic miracles, which I'll be bringing up, where the Host actually turns to a piece of heart tissue and bleeds. That's pretty crazy!

But it's amazing. It's an amazing testimony to the veracity of the Truth.

So, I want to take this moment, too, to thank you, Heartdwellers, for taking care of us and for your donations. It's really helped us stay afloat and keep moving on. And keep going.

And not too long from now we're gonna be having a book on Healing that's gonna come out. And I'll share that with you. It'll be a free download and free to anyone who wants to ask us for a copy - we'll send it out at no charge.

But I want to thank you very, very much for supporting us and being faithful. It means so much to us. God bless you all.

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