

## The Stigmata, II

attested by the saint, and her testimony is confirmed by the humility of her entire life, which led her to ask and obtain immediately the invisibility of this exceptional favor. In this case we see how all the physical and moral circumstances of the fact confirm its origin.

The world ignores the miracle of the stigmata, as do many Catholics. They ignore it to their great detriment. They ignore Our Lord.

Bartholomew of Pisa, quoted by Pope Benedict XIV, wrote the following:

Many men and women saints, of widely different temperaments, have been absorbed with ardent love in the infused contemplation of the sufferings of Christ and, nevertheless, they have not had the stigmata. Among them must be numbered the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Mary Magdalen, and many others prior to St. Francis of Assisi, the first stigmatic, and many others subsequent to him. This sign of ardent love, united to infused contemplation, does not suffice to produce the stigmata. Christ Jesus grants it to whom He will, when He will and as He will. Stigmatization is an essentially extraordinary grace that is not in the normal way of sanctity.

A few more things:

1. The term stigmata originates from the line at the end of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, where he mentioned that he bore the marks of Jesus on his body. *Stigma* is a Greek word for mark or tattoo, and *stigmata* is plural for that.

2. If St. Paul is included, then here is a list of those who have received the stigmata:

Saint Paul the Apostle, Blessed Lucia Brocadelli of Narni, Saint Catherine of Ricci, Saint Catherine of Siena, Blessed Anne Catherine Emerich, St. Francis of Assisi, Saint Gemma Galgani, Saint Veronica Giuliani, Saint John of God, Saint Faustina Kowalska, Blessed Marie of the Incarnation, Marie Rose Ferron, Marcelline Pauper, Marthe Robin, St. Therese Neumann, St. Padre Pio, St. Rita of Cascia, Zlatko Sudac, Natuzza Evolo, Maria Esperanza de Bianchini.

3. 80% of those who have received the stigmata are female.

4. You probably have not heard of Marthe Robin on this list. She was a French mystic with whom Dom Jean Rois, O.S.B., Abbot of Fontgombault, was very close. When he received a personal letter from Pope St. Paul VI to stop using the old rite, Fontgombault switched to the new rite the next day. Dom Rois was heartbroken, and went to Marthe Robin to ask if they would get the old rite back. She said "Yes, but you will not live to see it." He wasn't very old when he died, and I've heard it said that he died of a broken heart. Archbishop Lefebvre was also a good friend of his, and used to do the ordinations at Fontgombault. But when the abbey switched to the new Mass, the Archbishop never spoke to the abbot again.

At Dom Rois' funeral (I attended it) the Archbishop was close by, but did not come to it. When the abbey received permission to celebrate the traditional rite again, they went back to it the next day.

I made a short pilgrimage to the home of Marthe Robin, and it was easily one of the most holy places I've ever had the privilege to know.

Could great supernatural compassion for the sufferings of Our Lord, and intensified by ecstasy, produce the bodily stigmata? St. Francis de Sales said "No." "Love has wonderful power to sharpen the imagination, so that it may penetrate even to the exterior, but the love which was within St. Francis simply could not produce openings in the flesh on the exterior. That is why the burning seraphim, coming to its help, darted at the saint rays of such penetrating light that it actually pierced the flesh with the exterior wounds of the Crucified which love had imprinted interiorly on the soul." ([Treatise on the Love of God](#))

There are a large number of saints who had intense compassion for the sufferings of Christ, and even had ecstasy, but did not receive the stigmata.

Could it be caused by autosuggestion, as a kind of psycho-somatic response to the sufferings of the Lord? Fr. Sempe thinks not.

In the first place, this theory supposes that there is always at the origin of the stigmata the two necessary factors of autosuggestion, that is, an extremely vivid representation of Jesus crucified coupled with a profound compassion for His sufferings and an ardent desire to receive these wounds. Now, these necessary factors do not, however, always exist. Among the best characterized and most authentic cases of stigmatization, there are some in which the subject did not desire, imagine, or even suspect as possible the impression on this flesh of the wounds of the Crucified. Indeed, a number of stigmatics have even begged Christ to spare them these exterior marks, and their prayer was not granted.

In conformity with the exigencies of this theory, its proponents also assume that the stigmatic pain precedes the exterior wound. Such is not always the fact. There are cases in which the subject at first felt no local pain, and never even thought of the stigmata. The wounds were made on his body from the exterior by a blinding blow of luminous rays, and immediately the pains, the extremely sharp pains, began.

But if it is the luminous rays which cause the wound, why bring in, by dint of hypotheses, the ideoplastic power of the imagination? Would not this psychological instrument be unnecessary since the rays exist? Does not the scientific method demand economy?

It is a fact that the majority of stigmatics receive the wounds without suggestion, without autosuggestion, without expecting them and without wishing them.

Blessed Raymond of Capua relates in his Life of St. Catherine of Siena that on August 18, 1370, the saint received the stigmata in an altogether unexpected manner following a prayer and a divine promise of the salvation of several persons; stigmatization was produced to confirm this promise. The absolutely unforeseen pain was as sharp as if her hand had been pierced with an iron nail driven by a hammer. At the petition of the saint, the stigmata remained invisible during her life. Later in the presence of several witnesses worthy of credence, the supernatural renewal of the fact took place with such effect that the saint swooned suddenly before their eyes, as if she had been mortally wounded. The fact and its supernatural origin are, moreover,