



Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara Religious Family of the Incarnate Word

May 29, 2015

Dear Friends and Family,

I hope all is well with you and your families. Things here have been going very well, especially after the Easter season with so many happy celebrations. I ask your apologies for not writing in such a long time, for I haven't been able to write down all the activities that we have been up to here in Italy. First, I would like to mention that during the Holy Week, I was able to go and help out at one of our convents in southern Italy. Two other sisters and I flew down to a smaller town called Conversano in Bari; which is about a two-hour drive from the town of Saint Padre Pio, (if you look at the boot of Italy, we were at the heel, right next to the ocean.) There we helped at our parish with an incredible procession of a large and antique crucifix made out of paper, which has turned a beautiful and rich shade of black that show its antiquity and tradition. This town has the custom of starting in the evening on Holy Thursday with the rosary and the Holy Mass. Afterwards Father carried the very large cross to a place within the courtyards of our convent where the people could venerate the cross. The veneration is put to a halt at four o'clock in the morning, yes I mean to a halt, because there is still a line of people coming from all over the town and the neighboring towns to venerate this cross. At four in the morning, we began the Traditional procession by passing through the town praying the Stations of the Cross, the holy rosary and singing Lenten hymns while stopping at various Churches, hospitals, schools, corner streets or large spacious areas. This was done in order that those people, who couldn't make it to our convent to venerate the cross, had the opportunity then to do so, but also to call to attention that this was the day that Christ was on his way to be crucified for us and our salvation. We ended the procession back at our convent at 1:30 in the afternoon on the same day. As you can probably imagine, we were very tired. However, to walk this procession all throughout the night was a powerful, memorial and beautiful way to remember and accompany our Lord, in a sense, the Way of the Cross.

More recently, two weekends ago, our whole community of 80 sisters was blessed with the incredible grace of visiting the Holy Shroud of Turin. As some of you know, the Holy Shroud of Turin is THE ACTUAL linen/fabric that wrapped the body of Jesus Christ when he was buried in the tomb. From an ordinary, plain-sight view, one can see all the scourge marks, the gaping wound of the spear, the piercing of the holes of the hands and feet of Jesus and the massive blood stains of the crown of thorns. But what is most interesting and spectacular from this view, is that one also sees the whole body of Jesus in a darker shade than that of the cloth itself impressed on the fabric. Before learning more about the Shroud, I never thought twice at the significance of this image of Jesus on the cloth, for I thought it was a great amount of blood-stains that showed Jesus' body; but that's just it. This image of Jesus, which has impressed itself on the cloth only 0.0007cm in depth, has remained over 2,000 years and hasn't disintegrated or corrupted. This in itself is such a great mystery that scientists cannot explain. However, what is even more fascinating is that when the scientist took a picture of the Holy Shroud in the negative, it reveals the radio-active force of light that manifests the complete body and face of Christ. How in the world did this come to be? The image that is shown in the negative came from an extremely powerful burst of light from the body of Christ; this was the incredible effect of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. As one can imagine, this was an astounding discovery of those who had been studying and testing the Holy Shroud. I would love to tell more of the scientific proofs of why this

truly is the authentic Shroud that wrapped the body of Jesus and the fact that this man was Jesus of whom it touched, but of the sake of the length of the letter, I will have to cut it short.

The last bit of news that I would love to share is my new mission that I received not so long ago. I am very excited and happy to announce that I will be missioned to northern Europe in Lithuania. My mission in the beginning will be to study the language, for I hear that it is very difficult. However, I know that with God's grace, he will help me conquer the weaknesses of fallen human nature and our difficulties. ☺ Hopefully, after I have learned the language, my apostolate will be to work with the youth and children in the parishes that our sisters and priest minister to. Our mission there in Lithuania, was founded in 2006 by the priests and then in 2008 for the sisters, so it's quite a newer mission that has plenty of work to build up and to spread the Gospel since the fall of Communism not so long ago. I am very excited as well as nervous and intimidated for this great big change in my life; but with the Lord's guidance and grace, I know that everything will be just fine if I am faithful to the beautiful gift of my vocation that he has graciously given to me. Another consolation is that my new superior is American; therefore, she obviously speaks English and the other two sisters that I live with speak either Italian or Spanish, both of which I'm familiar. So to communicate with my new community won't be so difficult, thanks be to God. (To be a woman, this is very important to talk to one another.)

Well, I think that is all the news that I have for now. I'm not sure when I will leave Italy for Lithuania or if I will be able to come back to the States for a few weeks either, but I will pass the message on to my family, which I'm sure my Father will post on Facebook.

Again, I thank everyone so much for all the prayers and support in my vocation. There have been many times when I have really felt the prayers of others helping me follow the Lord's call. I truly appreciate every amount of help that you do for me, whether it be financially or spiritually, big or small. Take assurance that you and your families are in my prayers daily or offered in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which our priests offer at least once a month for our friends and benefactors. May God bless you in all the needs that are wanting in your life. Lastly, I commend myself to your continued prayers.

In Christ and Mary,
Sr. Mary Rock of Constancy Powell, SSVMM