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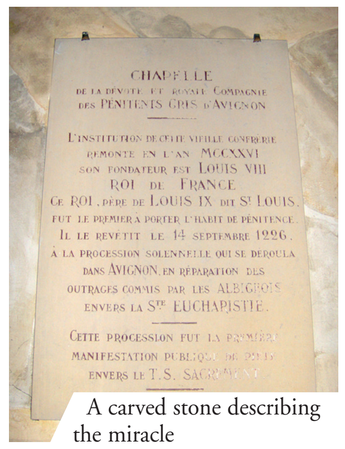
Eucharistic Miracle of AVIGNON

FRANCE, 1433

On November 30, 1433 a small church run by the Gray Penitents of the Franciscan Order was exposing a consecrated Host for Perpetual Adoration. After days of rain the rivers swelled, and surprisingly, Avignon was submerged. By boat, two friars of the Order succeeded in reaching the church where the Holy Sacrament had been left for adoration. When they entered the church, they saw that the waters were divided to the right and to the left, leaving the altar and the Sacrament perfectly dry.

Stained glass window inside the church, depicting the miracle

The Altar where the miracle took place



A carved stone describing the miracle

Ancient engraving of the miracle of Avignon

Stained glass window of the Chapel

The Eucharistic miracle of Avignon occured in the Church of the Holy Cross, home of the Gray Penitents of the Franciscan Order, whose founding goes back to the times of pious King Louis VIII. At the time of this miracle, Avignon was considered the center of Christendom, and the city's "Palais des Papes" was home to a series of seven popes.

After several days of heavy rain, the Sorgue and Rhône Rivers rose steadily and reached a dangerous height. Finally, on November 30, 1433, Avignon, was flooded. The friars were certain that their little church, which stood along the Sorgue, had been destroyed by the raging waters. Fearing that the Blessed Sacrament, which was exposed for Perpetual Adoration, had been swept away, the head of the Order and another friar rowed to the church. Getting there was difficult, but when they finally arrived they found a miracle. Although water around the church was four feet high, a pathway from the entrance of the church to the altar was perfectly dry.

The Sacred Host was unscathed. The pathway from the entrance to the altar called to mind the parting of the Red Sea in the time of Moses, for all along the sides of the church, water steadily rose, but the pathway remained completely dry. Amazed by what they were seeing, the friars had others from their Order come to the church to verify the miracle. The news spread rapidly, and many people, including those in authority, came to the Church, singing songs of praise and of thanks to the Lord. Several hundred people witnessed this miracle.

Later on, the Gray Penitents determined that the anniversary of the miracle would be celebrated in the church every year on the feast day of St. Andrew the Apostle. Even today, every November 30th, the brothers reunite at the Chapelle des Pénitents Gris to celebrate the memory of the miracle. Before the blessing of the Holy Sacrament, the brothers perform a sacred chant taken from the Canticle of Moses, which was composed after the parting of the Red Sea: *"I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant… At a breath of your anger the waters piled up, the flowing waters stood like a mound, the flood waters congealed in the midst of the sea… In your mercy you led the people you redeemed; in your strength you guided them to your holy dwelling."* (Exodus 15, 1-18).

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