

CONSOLATIONS OF THE HOLY SOULS

St. Stanislaus of Cracow
and the Resuscitated

PETER MILES

*Peter replied that he had no such desire.
He was in Purgatory, but he would rather return
thither immediately and endure its pains, than expose
himself to damnation in this terrestrial life.*

This contentment in the midst of the most intense suffering cannot be explained otherwise than by the Divine consolations which the Holy Ghost infuses into the souls in Purgatory. This Divine Spirit, by means of faith, hope, and charity, puts them in the disposition of a sick person who has to submit to very painful treatment, but the effect of which is to restore him to perfect health. This sick person suffers, but he loves his salutary suffering. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, gives a similar contentment to the holy souls. Of this we have a striking example in Peter Miles, raised from the dead by St. Stanislaus of Cracow, who preferred to return to Purgatory rather than to live again upon earth.

The celebrated miracle of this resurrection happened in 1070. It is thus related in the *Acta Sanctorum* on May 7. St. Stanislaus was Bishop of Cracow when the Duke Boleslaw II governed Poland. He did not neglect to remind this prince of his duties, who scandalously violated them before all his people.

Boleslaw was irritated by the holy liberity of the Prelate, and to revenge himself he excited against him the heirs of a certain Peter Miles, who had died three years previously after having sold a piece of ground to the church of Cracow. The heirs accused the saint of having usurped the ground, without having paid the owner. Stanislaus declared that he had paid for the land, but as the witnesses who should have defended him had been either bribed or intimidated, he was denounced as a usurper of the property of another, and condemned to make restitution.

Then, seeing that he had nothing to expect from human justice, he raised his heart to God, and received a sudden inspiration. He asked for a delay of three days, promising to make Peter Miles appear in person, that he might testify to the legal purchase and payment of the lot.

They were granted to him in scorn. The saint fasted, watched, and prayed to God to take up the defence of his cause. The third day, after having celebrated Holy Mass, he went out accompanied by his clergy and many of the faithful, to the place where Peter had been interred. By his orders the grave was opened; it contained nothing but bones. He touched them with his crosier, and in the name of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, he commanded the dead man to arise.

Suddenly the bones became reunited, were covered with flesh, and, in sight of the stupefied people, the dead man was seen to take the Bishop by the hand and walk towards the tribunal. Boleslaw, with his court and an immense crowd of people, were waiting the result with the most lively expectation. "Behold Peter," said the saint to Boleslaw; "he comes, prince, to give testimony before you. Interrogate him; he will answer you."

It is impossible to depict the stupefaction of the Duke, of his councillors, and of the whole concourse Of people. Peter affirmed that he had been paid for the ground; then turning towards his heirs, he reproached them for having accused the pious prelate against all rights of justice; then he exhorted them to do penance for so grievous a sin.

It was thus that iniquity, which believed itself already sure of success, was confounded. Now comes the circumstance which concerns our subject, and to which we wished to refer. Wishing to complete this great miracle for the glory of God, Stanislaus proposed to the deceased that, if he desired to live a few years longer, he would obtain for him this favour from God. Peter replied that he had no such desire. He was in Purgatory, but he would rather return thither immediately and endure its pains, than expose himself to damnation in this terrestrial life. He entreated the saint only to beg of God to shorten the time of his sufferings that he might the sooner enter the abode of the blessed. After that, accompanied by the Bishop and a vast multitude, Peter returned to his grave, laid himself down, his body fell to pieces, and his bones resumed the same state in which they had first been found. We have reason to believe that the saint soon obtained the deliverance of his soul.

That which is the most remarkable in this example, and which should most attract our attention, is that a soul from Purgatory, after having experienced the most excruciating torments, prefers that state of suffering to the life of this world; and the reason which he gives for this preference is, that in this mortal life we are exposed to the danger of being lost and incurring eternal damnation.