

Venerable LOUIS BRISSON (1817-1908)

French priest, founder of the Oblates and Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales

The Healing of Carlos “Carlitos” Peñaherrera

(excerpted from the “Fattispecie Cronologica a cura della Postulazione,” in the *Positio super miro*)

Carlos Luis Peñaherrera was born on June 23, 1945 in Riobamba, the capital of the province of Chimborazo, in Ecuador. His father testified that he “was a completely healthy and normal child” and that “in my family no one had (any) hereditary disease.”

The accident happened on June 17, 1953, at approximately 5:00 in the afternoon, in the city of Alausi. The iron wheel of a tractor fell on Carlos’ right foot. What his father saw was that his son’s big toe was completely shattered and flattened, almost totally separated from his foot; two other toes were also broken, and there was blood in his boot.

Ten minutes later, at the local hospital, the doctors examined Carlos and found that his big toe was crushed to the point that they would not be able to reposition the soft tissue. The local hospital had no x-ray lab nor adequate surgical instruments, but they did their best to reconstruct a small portion of the bone on his big toe and to immobilize the other two toes. Carlos went home that same day and was in severe pain all night.

The prognosis was very reserved. The doctors were concerned that in the short term he might suffer a secondary infection, and in the long run that he would walk only with difficulty and that his toe was at risk of atrophy due to the profound damage. Carlos himself remembers hearing that he might not be able to walk well because of the imbalance caused by lacking part of the bone in his big toe and not being able to bend his other toes.

The next day his aunt explained what happened to Sister Marguerite-Thérèse Colliard, the mistress of novices for the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales (who ran the school where Carlos was a student). Sr. Marguerite-Thérèse and one of the novices (Sister Lucia Margarita Ganchose Palma) went to visit Carlos that same morning. The sisters brought with them a relic of Fr. Brisson and suggested an urgent novena to ask for healing through his intercession. They placed the relic on Carlos’ foot. In addition to the two Sisters, Carlos, his parents, and a friend of the family participated in the novena. Other family members passing by were skeptical; they reacted with mocking laughter, yet they also prayed.

The novena consisted of nine invocations of the prayer for the beatification of Fr. Brisson, followed each time by these words: “My God, in consideration of the promise you have made to give to those who ask with faith and fidelity, we beg you to grant the miraculous healing

that we ask of you through the intercession of the Venerable Father Louis Brisson.” And each time they added the *Pater Noster*.

Sister Marguerite-Thérèse noted that after the novena the Sisters were surprised by the change of attitude of the skeptical family members, who had become very respectful and serious. She recommended that the family continue to recite the Novena prayers, and that they leave only the relic of Fr. Brisson in place without adding any others ... to which the skeptical ones replied, “Yes, only the good Father.” And after the Sisters departed, one of the ladies said to Carlos’ mother, “By the faith with which it has been asked, this miracle will happen.”

The family and the doctors saw a noticeable, albeit gradual, improvement following this novena. Sr. Marguerite-Thérèse said that three days after the accident, the doctor who changed the bandages on Carlos’ big toe was surprised to find it in good condition and absent of any complications. The next day, when Sr. Marguerite-Thérèse visited Carlos, she found him kneeling on his bed, his right foot still immobilized, and playing with a ball. She asked Carlos if he felt bad; he shook his head no and kept on playing.

Just six days after the accident, on June 23, Carlos remembers being wheeled into the dining room to celebrate his birthday, which he enjoyed because he no longer felt any pain. The pain which had gradually diminished was gone, and to his surprise, when he took the bandage off he could move his toe. On the tenth day following the accident, he was walking again, without limping and without suffering. He even took part in the town festivals on June 27-29 “with his own feet.” According to his father, just five days later the healing was complete and Carlos was running and jumping as if nothing had happened. By the end of the school year, on July 25, 1953, x-rays showed that all his fractures were healed.

Even the doctor who cared for him was astonished. He found, only three days after treating him in town, that Carlos’ condition was satisfactory, despite his not having been taken to another hospital. Ten days after treating him, the doctor was surprised to see Carlos walking without a limp and that his toe could move without any inflammation or hematoma. The doctor testified that, based on his experience, a child with damage as severe as he had seen could not recover so perfectly and so rapidly as Carlos had.

Later in life, Carlos’ full recovery was once more confirmed when he passed examination by the U.S. Military Service and was able to enlist in the Air Force and serve in the Vietnam War. After his military service, Carlos even trained to run in the 1979 Boston Marathon (a 26-mile race). Today he continues to reside in Ecuador, free of any difficulty with his foot.