

# Desperate for God

(Part 1 of 2)

Did you hear about the “mystery Allah egg” near Almaty, Kazakhstan? In July a state news agency announced that, just after a powerful hail storm hit a Kazakh village, a chicken laid an egg with the word “Allah” inscribed on its shell. “Our mosque confirmed that it says ‘Allah’ in Arabic,” said Bites Amantayeva, a farmer from the village of Stepnoi in eastern Kazakhstan. “We’ll keep this egg and we don’t think it’ll go bad.”

Since Kazakhstan is a Central Asian state where Sunni Islam is a dominant religion, people of other faiths were quick to scoff. One American called the story, “a sign that Muslims are not overly endowed with smarts.”

Oh, yeah? Then what should we make of the following stories?

Almost thirty years ago in New Mexico, Maria Rubio was rolling a burrito when she noticed skillet burns on the tortilla resembling the face of Jesus. Several thousands of curious pilgrims have now trekked to the Rubios' small stucco house to view this. “The lard moves in mysterious ways,” someone said. I hope Mrs. Rubio is at least happier than she looks in the photo.



Maria Rubio with burrito

In 2004, Diana Duyser auctioned on eBay a 10-year-old grilled cheese sandwich which she said bore the image of the Virgin Mary. The sandwich drew bids as high as \$22,000 before eBay closed the site. Duyser claimed the sandwich never got moldy.



In 2005, Susan McGuinness, of Dorchester, Massachusetts, spotted a metal "miracle" on her roasting pan just before she put it in the dishwasher. The burnt label on the pan, she declared, looks like the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus. People soon were calling McGuinness, asking her to pray for them.



A few weeks later in Chicago, Obdulia Delgado was driving home after work along Fullerton Avenue when she also saw Mary in a salt or water mark on a concrete expressway underpass. Hundreds of people soon gathered, knelt in prayer, took pictures, inscribed their names and left flowers at the scene. "It's a miracle," Jose Recinos said. "When you see it...you believe in the faith," said Snezna DiLorenz.



Perhaps such "visions" tell us more about anxiety than piety. Whether people see Allah in an egg or Jesus in a tortilla or Mary on a stained wall, people everywhere – people around us every day – are desperate to hear from God, to feel he is near and cares about their struggles. When one is desperate enough, perhaps any "sign" will do.

"We all need a miracle," my Roman Catholic friend Giuseppe told me this week.

"Why?" I asked.

"We need God's help to take the next step, to go forward. Without that, life is too hard."

Consider that this week. What would you say to that?

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