

NEWS FROM ITALY

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Meditation on the motto Passio Christi Passio Hominis

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We can view the Shroud from four standpoints. The first standpoint is that of curiosity. In the 1978 Exposition, the naïf Exposition, which nevertheless opened the subsequent and frequent Expositions, a coach driver who had accompanied some pilgrims said at a certain point: “Since I have the whole day ahead of me, I may as well go and have a look at “that thing”. He joined the queue. When afterwards someone asked him what he had felt when he saw “that thing”, he answered: “My feelings got all in a tangle.”

We do not know whether there were any further developments, nor have we sought to find out, because only God can read our hearts.

The second approach is the scientific one, which investigates the origin of the Shroud: this is the view of intellectual curiosity, which has always haunted us, and we prefer to leave this aspect to the experts.

The third attitude is that of solidarity. Always in 1978, coming out of the Cathedral one of the visitors said: “looking at the Shroud, I empathized and realized that there is something that binds us, something supernatural.” This is the approach of the person who, in front of the Shroud, is able to see all the passions and suffering of humanity, that brings together through the eyes of a human being and the eyes of faith all the indescribable sufferings of mankind: personal and collective suffering, suffering caused by humans: the Shoah, the gulags, the Chinese cultural revolution with its one hundred million dead... and we could go on! Suffering caused by nature: tsunamis, earthquakes, the dead: 200 and more coffins... as we saw in Aquila in recent days! And then the suffering caused by all of our mistakes that today we no longer call sins, but “mistakes,” which hurt, which so often cannot easily be healed.

And here is the fourth view: but should it not perhaps be the first one? The view of faith! I gaze at the Shroud: I do not know whether it is the imprint of Jesús, but I see Him. I see Him but I also see myself and I see the tragedy of history. A tragedy which is a pandemic that we all suffer from: the view of faith! This pandemic does not come from chickens or pigs, but from the guilty conscience of man. The pandemic of self-pity: it is a serious one, you know! What is it? It is the fact that it is always others who are wrong, always others who make mistakes, always others who cause harm. We – and I am right at the top of the list – are always the victims. Others are always the torturers. And so I see Jesus in the crucified man: I see this Jesus, arriving beaten, horrible beaten, before God His Father and I hear him say: “I take upon myself their sins which they call “mistakes”, oh Father, and you, Father forgive them.” Then Jesus, in the crucified man, comes before me:

“don’t you see how much I loved you!” And I recover from the pandemic, I look at the Shroud and say: “I am the torturer, Lord; I really have beaten you up! You are the innocent victim, and so forgive me, my Lord!”

Thus the view of the Shroud, the view of the truth, becomes the view of love, and the view of love becomes the greater view of the embrace. I start from the Shroud so as not to blame any one any more, but to embrace everyone.

Passio Christi, passio hominis, hoping that passio Christi may become for all of us our passion too, as the real reason of life.