

IN MEMORIAM

Paul-Ceslas Lavergne, O.P.

1890-1985

Born in Paris, twelfth of fifteen children, Paul Lavergne had a radiant childhood in an artistic and profoundly religious environment. Very early, he became devoted to the little Carmelite, St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, and like her, he was always fascinated by the Face of the divine Crucified.

At the age of twenty, he entered the Convent of the Order of Friar Preachers (Dominicans), and was given his religious name, Brother Ceslas. His studies, interrupted by World War I, were completed in 1921, at which time he was ordained a priest. He was sent immediately to the Ecole Biblique et Archeologique at Jerusalem, where he was student, then devoted collaborator, of Fr. M.-J. Lagrange, renowned exegete, and then of Fr. Hughes Vincent, distinguished archeologist.

Returning to France in 1928, he published the *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, in French. His life as a Dominican was spent between apostolic preaching, Biblical and theological studies, and the multitude of little services which he loved to render; humble and hidden tasks in the spirit of St. Therese. After a second period in the Holy Land (1945-1956), he returned to France. For awhile he was prior of the Convent of Corbara in Corsica.

In 1961, Fr. Lavergne published his extensive article, "The Proof of the Resurrection according to John 20:7" (*Sindon*, April & Sept.), in which he solidly established that the Evangelist does not mention bandelets in the burial of Christ, and that the sudarium which was on his head was a small cloth used as a chinband. He demonstrated that John describes the Shroud as sunk down, collapsed upon itself, after the Resurrection, while the sudarium, remaining inside the Shroud, formed a visible eminence at the place where the Lord's head had lain. Seventeen years later, this exegesis was given as a report to the II Congress of Sindonology. Because of his advanced age, Fr. Lavergne was not able to attend the Congress; his paper was read by a friend.

Always a fervent champion of the "Silent Witness" of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, Fr. Lavergne wrote several more articles for *Sindon*. One of these, "The Lance Thrust to Jesus' Heart", appeared in English, translation in *Spectrum* #11

(June, 1984). In another article (1984) he shows how Dan. 2:9 can shed light on John's expression (20:7): in *unum locum*—in the same place (as before).

Fr. Lavergne, at age 94, was still intently pursuing his research on the Word of God—in Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic. The youthfulness of his spirit, his intelligence and great heart, never flagged. Even on his death bed, a few hours before the end, he conversed with his Dominican nephew (whose signature appears below) on the nuances and beauties of the Holy Texts, which had been his lifelong joy. He died serenely on Sunday, 14 July 1985, leaving us, going where he could contemplate, in perfect light, the Face of the Savior he had sought with such dedication in the Holy Book and the Sacred Shroud.

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