

Replica of the Shroud of Turin

Photos by the Author.

A TRUE COPY OF THE SHROUD
IN SUMMIT, NEW JERSEY

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The cloistered Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary in Summit, New Jersey, are the guardians of a True Copy of the Holy Shroud of Turin. They received it on 6 April 1924 as a gift from the Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of SS. Dominic and Sisto, Rome. It is the only known copy in existence in the United States. Inscribed on the replica are these words:

CAVATO DAL ORIGINALE IN TVRINO L'ANNO 1624

According to the documents, it is one of two copies made on linen of the same dimensions of the Turin Shroud and laid full-length upon the Original. The whereabouts of the second copy is unknown.* The image is painted in sepia tones with the wounds a rust-red.

Upon receiving the copy, the nuns of Summit desired to obtain permission, for themselves and their pilgrims, to venerate the replica, as well as Papal approval to do this. Their request for papers of authentication was answered by Mother M. Margherita of the Roman Community, who explained that the copy had been venerated by the Dominican Sisters of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Rome, for nearly 300 years. Then, in 1911, the Community was transferred from St. Catherine's to the Monastery of SS. Dominic and Sisto and in the moving, the box containing various authentications was lost. (Letter of 27 June 1924)

Between June 1924 and March 1926, a great deal of research took place toward re-affirming the relic's authenticity. The Rev. Father Philip Caterini, O.P., Procurator General of the Order of Preachers, was able to re-establish authenticity of the copy by documents found in the State Archives at Turin. He presented his findings to Rev. James Flannery of New York and to Bishop O'Connor, and on 29 March 1926 (Palm Sunday) the True Copy received public veneration for the first time in America. It remains on public view to this day.

* Of all the copies in Don Luigi Fossati's study (*Spectrum* #12 and #13), only one carries the expression "Cavato" and the inscription is identical to the Summit copy, except for the date. In *Spectrum* 12, p. 9 is the description, on p. 11 the reproduction, of a copy in Lisbon which is inscribed: CAVATO DAL ORIGINALE IN TVRINO L'ANNO 1620.

The Documents

Father Caterini's research identified this copy by a document transcribed by Giammaria Sanno Solaro, S.J.:¹

The Most Serene Infanta Maria Maddalena of Austria, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, in a letter of April, 1624, asks Margherita of Savoy, Duchess of Mantua, daughter of Carlo Emanuel I, that with her good offices she may obtain that two copies of the *Sindone* may be made for her. And these two copies were not only executed faithfully by a good painter on linen, in texture, dimensions and painting similar to those of the true *Sindone*, but in order to give them greater value they were both laid for some time upon the true Relic.

It was the Duchess Maria Maddalena, a close friend of the Sisters of St. Catherine Monastery, who presented this copy to them.

In a letter of 8 March 1926 to Bishop O'Connor, Fr. Caterini quotes the information from Sanno Solaro, adding that the original letters of petition for the copies and acknowledgment of receipt of the gift exist in the State Archives at Turin; and in a letter dated 27 March 1959, the Director of the Turin Archives confirmed the presence of these documents in Volume 31, Numbers 15 and 33. Correspondence and photocopies of the documents are kept in the Dominican Monastery.

The Miraculous Stain

What makes this replica treasured and venerated to this day is the fact that it came into physical contact with the Holy Shroud of Turin. Furthermore, there is an oral tradition that the copy received a stain corresponding to the location of the Wound in the Side, as it is seen on the Holy Shroud. The following description appeared in the Sisters' publication, *Rosary Pilgrim*:²

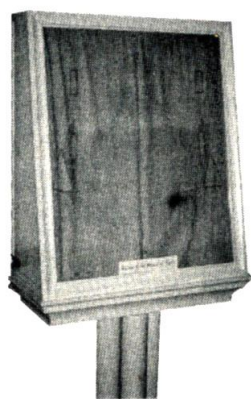
This copy...was afterwards laid upon the original Winding-Sheet and when it was removed it was found that the Wound of the Side had become damp as though with blood, and that this effusion had stained the copy, a circumstance which caused our Replica to be held in great veneration.

Expositions

The first exposition of the copy, as mentioned above, took place on 29 March 1926. It was displayed within an ornate bronze frame with an inner frame of mahogany, donated to the Sisters by Mrs. P. Peck of Boston. The frame, made to stand vertically, measures 7 ft. by 3 ft., carefully designed to the full dimensions of the copy; and it was set with glass in front and back in order to show both the frontal and dorsal sides of the relic, folded between the head-images. A full-length two-piece curtain with a top valance was also provided. During veneration, the curtain was opened and spot lights were focused on the image of Jesus.

For some time, the replica was located in the lower level of the Adoration Chapel. Later, the Mother Prioress and her Council decided to have the copy placed upstairs, and to expose only the upper half of the frontal image. Mr. Richard Markey designed a wooden case and pedestal which would allow the copy to be exposed and easily removed. Shortly after Mr. Markey delivered the display case, the copy was removed from the big bronze frame and transferred to its new enclosure.

The case measures 32" (81cm) by 39" (99cm). There are rollers at top and bottom, on which the copy is slightly stretched to place light tension on the exposed image. This system eliminates horizontal wrinkles and creases while protecting the lower part of the frontal image and the entire dorsal image, which is carefully rolled around a bottom roller.



The Replica in the box made by Mr. Markey.

The head, shoulders, arms and folded hands are exposed, giving prominence to the Wound in the Side. The patches covering the burn marks from the 1532 fire are represented. In the upper right-hand corner, part of the inscription is visible: CAVATO DAL ORIGINALE IN TV[rino]. The replica has remained in this case since the 1960s and is located in the front entranceway of the Adoration Chapel at 543 Springfield Avenue in Summit.

From the appearance of the linen cloth, an observer would not guess that it is more than 350 years old. Its excellent condition is a tribute to the generations of Dominican Nuns who cherished it with great honor and care. The Sisters in Summit, strictly cloistered and wearing the full habit, are committed to contemplation, the worship of God and the praying of the Perpetual Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament. And they continue the tradition of their Sisters in Rome who, in Fr. Caterini's words, had "always most jealously guarded [this copy] as a sacred treasure."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Author wishes to express heartfelt thanks to Sister Mary Antoninus for opening the Dominican archives for this research and for providing invaluable first-hand information which enhanced the contents of this article; and to Mr. Arnold Hartley for his translations of the Italian documents.

NOTES

1. P. GIAMMARIA SANNA SOLARO, S.J.: *La S. Sindone the si venera a Torino*, Vincenzo Bona, Turin 1901; Chapt. XII p. 57.
2. *Rosary Pilgrim*, March 1932, quarterly magazine formerly published by the Dominican Nuns in Summit, N.J.