

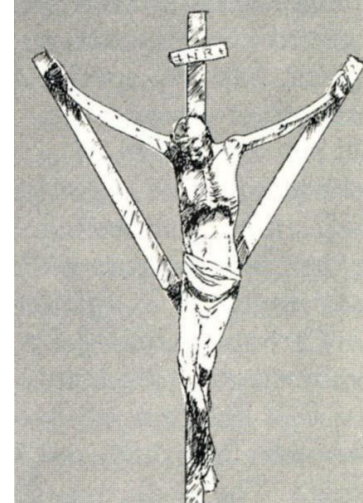
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. What is the relation of stigmatics to the Shroud? The Shroud shows the nail wound in the back of the wrist whilst all stigmatics have wounds in their palms.

Carmel Camilleri, Malta

A. One thing at least is certain: The stigmata are not reproductions of historical reality. The wide variety of manifestations is proof enough, one instance being that some stigmatics have the "lance wound" on the right, some on the left. It would seem that the location of the stigmata might be determined by two factors: 1), the personality and mental images of the mystic. One good example: Praying before a Pollard cross, common in Germanic countries from early medieval times, Catherine Emmerich (d. 1924), evidently "taking up her cross", was marked on the shoulder with a Y.

Pollard Cross: The Coesfeld Crucifix



And 2), the general conceptions about crucifixions in the minds of the mystics' contemporaries. These general conceptions were certainly formed in contemplation of crucifixes, which have consistently shown nails in the palms of the corpus, according to Jesus' words, "See my hands ... " in a post-resurrection appearance. (Lk 24:39, Jo 20:20,24-28) But crucifixes are made by artists, none of whom ever witnessed a crucifixion.

The great artists of the Renaissance hung corpses for models and were dismayed when their macabre subjects fell because the nails ripped the palms right through. Yet, faithful to artistic tradition, they continued to place nails in the palms when representing Christ crucified. Rubens and Van Eyck departed from tradition, placing nails in the wrists; but their correction is not followed even today.

What can some of the mystics tell us? Theresa Neumann (d. 1962) said: "Do not think that Our Lord was nailed through the palms, where I have my stigmata. These marks have only a mystic significance. Jesus would had to have been fixed more solidly on the Cross." Although St. Brigitte (d. 1373) did not bear stigmata, she relates that in her visions, the Virgin said to her: "The hands of my son were transpierced at the place where the bone is the most solid."

Another mystic is quoted by Antoine Legrand (*Le Linceul de Turin*, Desclée de Brouwer, 1980, pg 148) as saying: "Above all, do not try to bring into agreement the revelations or particular marks granted to those whom the Lord has so favored; you will never succeed. God gives that which is useful and can be understood by those to whom he

addresses himself, taking into consideration their individual mentality. Hold to the sure facts of the Holy Shroud of Turin."

As lucid an explanation as one could hope for. Unfortunately the amiable Professor neglects to tell us the source of his quotation.

Knowledge of the Shroud is spreading far and wide, and with it the knowledge that the nails went through Jesus' wrists at the Space of Destot. And today we know of two stigmatics whose wounds are in the Wrist. One is Bro. Gino Burrese, OMV, of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima, near Rome. Another is an American priest who, because he is engaged in a nationwide mission, prefers not to be identified. It is not recorded that either Bro. Gino or the American priest has any special devotion to the Shroud, though both are well-informed about it.

While it might be possible to formulate a tentative hypothesis about the location of stigmata on the bodies of the subjects, the fundamental question, comprising all the amazing—one might almost say impossible—phenomena which accompany the wounds, may never be satisfactorily explained.

Perhaps this is the reason that there are few books devoted to the subject. An authoritative study of the manifold aspects of the problem is *The Enigma of the Stigmata*, by Rene Biot. A member of the Lourdes International Medical Committee, Biot is a specialist in stigmata. The book, translated from the French, was published in 1962 by Hawthorn Books, New York; Vol 57 under Section V of the series *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. Works in other languages are found in the bibliography.



Padre Pio. The wounds in his palms bled continuously from 20 Sept. 1918 until his death on 23 Sept. 1968. (Photo "Voix du Padre Pio")