

Stations of the Cross
with Meditations Drawn From
The Shroud of Turin:
Relic and Icon of the Precious Blood

Introduction

Although the Catholic Church has not given a definitive judgment on the authenticity of the Shroud housed in the cathedral of the Italian city of Turin as the actual burial cloth of Jesus Christ, preferring instead to speak of it as a “relic” or an “icon,” the evidence is overwhelming that it could not possibly be a forgery. Despite attempts to discredit its authenticity at the time of the 1988 carbon dating, more recent and accurate research continues to affirm its undoubted genuineness. These meditations assume this to be the case and the websites listed below may be consulted for further documentation.

First Station: Condemnation

Scripture:

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged...Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified (Jn. 19:1,16)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

I have always been struck by the almost matter-of-fact manner in which the evangelists record the details of the Lord's passion in the several gospels. For example, the gospels say with startling straightforwardness how Pilate had Jesus "scourged" (Mt. 27:26, Mk. 15:15) or more simply "chastised" (Lk. 23:16, 22) or even "flogged" (Jn. 19:2). There is no dwelling on the frightful brutality those words imply, or what this episode in Christ's suffering entailed. Even if cinematic portrayals of the scourging at the pillar have evoked the atrocity committed on the Lord's body leaving us to shudder in horror, the Shroud of Turin would neither allow us to pass over this event as discreetly as the evangelists do nor think that a film could capture what actually took place.

The Shroud of Turin reports over 100 marks inflicted on the Lord's body by a Roman *flagrum* – a whip with two or three leather or rope thongs at the end of which were attached small leaden pellets designed to tear the flesh and to inflict maximum pain. The body of the Man of Sorrows was scourged on the back, legs, hips and buttocks with the lash marks reaching around to the front as well. There were two soldiers who administered the scourging. Other marks indicate the possible use of reeds in addition to the Roman whip – something characteristic of an implement used in a whipping according to Jewish practice – thus suggesting a first and then a second scourging.

The scourging at the pillar is thought to have been unusually severe even by Roman standards as this was a preliminary strategy on Pilate's part to have Jesus released – the sentence of crucifixion not yet contemplated (cf. Lk. 23:16,22; Jn. 19:1). The Lord hence suffered immeasurably more than a typical victim sent to the cross. His unusually quick death can be attributed to this excessive scourging – beyond what was normally carried out since the Romans would not want a victim to die under the lash prior to being crucified. The severity of the scourging is believed to have caused a build-up of pleural fluid around the lungs and been the decisive factor in Jesus' dying sooner than expected.

Anyone devoted to the Precious Blood of Christ would naturally recoil while meditating on this scene. It defies the imagination how much suffering the scourging entailed and how much Blood was splattered and puddled around the infamous pillar. Few hearts could withhold an outpouring of compassion directed toward the Person of Christ when considering the silent witness of the Shroud to this horrific outrage.

Collect

Let us pray.

O God, who willed that your Only Begotten Son should undergo the Cross to save the human race; grant, we pray, that we, who have known his mystery on earth, may merit the grace of his redemption in heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Votive Mass of the Holy Cross*)

Second Station: the Cross

Scripture:

The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face. (Jn. 19:2-3)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

Three of the four gospel accounts of the Lord's passion mention, in identical language, a crowning with thorns (Mt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2) while Luke is content to mention an array of royal-like clothing placed on Jesus as he was paraded before Herod Antipas (Lk. 23:11; cf. Mt. 27:28, Mk. 15:17). Throughout all the narratives there is a continuous theme of mocking any claim being made of Jesus' messianic kingship, the pretension to which is the civil charge leading to Jesus' execution for sedition against the Roman Empire. It is the crowning with thorns, however, that symbolizes this mockery most potently and has captured the imagination of Christian artists ever since.

Such portrayals, nevertheless, usually misrepresent the actual torture inflicted on the Lord by this event and it is the Shroud of Turin that informs us as to its particular horror beginning with the nature of the crown itself. The many puncture wounds around the scalp area of the Crucified show a pattern "consistent with a cap of thorns rather than a circlet crown" with evidence from the patterns of blood flow at the nape of the neck "suggesting they were halted by a circular band which held the thorn branches in place," perhaps a length of rope tied around the face and head."*

I dare say the contribution made to the Lord's suffering by this thicket of thorns has been underappreciated as compared say to the scourging. The Shroud, however, tells a different story. Among other things, analysis of the wounds makes it likely the crown was plaited from a local shrub whose thorns were an inch long, curved and especially sharp. These many thorns would have caused excruciating pain as they stabbed at the highly sensitive and numerous nerve endings present in the forehead, temple and scalp; irritation of one of these nerves in particular "is among the worst pain a human can experience." Suffice it to note how the well-known "reverse-3" bloodstain so prominent on Jesus' brow represents a flow of blood resulted from its having "contracted and formed ridges under intense pain."

And what commitments of Christian life does the scourging and crowning invite? It seems to me their injustice and viciousness should alert Christians to such things in our world today and impel them to actively oppose them. For example, the world is full of politicians prepared to let others suffer as a strategy of appeasement toward their self-seeking constituents. Their craven methods ought to be opposed and their support withdrawn. Our criminal justice system frequently imposes unnecessarily cruel and inhumane punishment on those it incarcerates such as indefinite solitary confinement, the treatment of juvenile offenders as adults, and the uneven and racially biased employment of the death penalty in the United States. All these should be opposed as well. Similarly, the culture of gun violence that spills immeasurable innocent blood on streets, in schools, in theaters, malls and in homes should be opposed and counter-measures supported. Many more examples could be cited wherein the Precious Blood of the Scourging and Crowning call forth a life of non-violent opposition to all suffering inflicted by unjust governance and human cruelty.

Collect

Let us pray.

O God, who willed your Son to submit for our sake
to the yoke of the Cross,
so that you might drive from us the power of the enemy;
grant us, your servants, to attain the grace of the resurrection.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Wednesday of Holy Week*)

Third Station: Felled

Scripture:

It was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God -- and afflicted. (Is 53:4)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

Among the new indications revealed by the Shroud are that the Lord “suffered a violent blunt trauma to the neck, chest and shoulder from behind, causing neuromuscular damage and lesions” centered in the upper right limb and shoulder areas. This probably resulted from collapsing under the weight of the horizontal beam of the cross which victims of crucifixion were made to carry on the way to execution. This fall, no doubt one of many, caused him to undergo “a dislocation of the shoulder and paralysis of the right arm.” The evidence suggests he fell forwards and the crossbeam caused a violent blow to that part of his Body as he fell to the ground. “Neck and shoulder muscle paralysis” were “caused by a heavy object hitting the back between the neck and shoulder and causing displacement of the head from the side opposite to the shoulder depression.”

Collect

Let us pray.

O God, who by the Precious Blood of your Only Begotten Son have redeemed the whole world,
preserve in us the work of your mercy,
so that, ever honoring the mystery of our salvation,
we may merit to obtain its fruits.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Votive Mass of the Most Precious Blood*)

Fourth Station: Co-redemptrix

Scripture:

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary: "Behold, this Child is appointed to cause the rise and fall of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed –" and a sword will pierce your souls as well. (Lk. 2:34-35)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

When writing to the Colossians, Paul offers a startling understanding of his apostolic ministry when he writes: *I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of his body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions (1:24)*. It is hard to understand what could possibly be lacking to the Redeemer's afflictions based on the evidence of the Shroud, for which there can be only one answer: "We are." Paul's doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ leaves room for us its members' own suffering to be caught up and merged with the suffering of its Head. But this had already been prophesied by the aged Simeon when he told the Mother of the Church a sword of sorrow would pierce her own soul on account of her Son's rejection. As such she was the first to know of the share Christ's disciples would have in his self-offering and her presence during his passion would signal its most excruciating participation. When therefor she is called the Co-redemptrix it is a way to acknowledge her lead in what Paul would describe and which all Christians share since *we are heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him, so that we may be glorified with him (Rom 8:17)*.

Collect

Let us pray.

Lord our God,
in your mysterious wisdom
you fill out the Passion of Christ
through the suffering that his members endure
in the many trials of this life.

As you chose to have the mournful Mother
stand by your Son in his agony on the Cross,
grant that we too may bring love and comfort
to our brothers and sisters in distress.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Mary at the Foot of the Cross I*)

Fifth Station: Conscription

Scripture:

They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. (Mark 15: 2)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

The findings which the Shroud reveals of the brutality the Lord experiences on the way to Calvary give credence to what the Synoptic gospels (though not John) tell us: that he could no longer bear the cross by himself and someone else, namely Simon of Cyrene, would have to be enlisted for this necessary assistance (cf. Mt. 27:32, Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:26). The biblical texts all use language telling us that Simon was pressed into, or seized upon, for this service, no doubt unwillingly.

In addition to the details reported above, other researchers have noted how the Shroud also gives evidence that “abrasions on the tip of his nose and the possible separation of his nasal cartilage from the bone” were also probably due to Jesus’ falls during the journey to Calvary, though the numerous bruises, contusions and swelling registered on the Holy Face would also have resulted from the several beatings suffered earlier during his passion as recorded by the several evangelists.

The Shroud of Turin provokes reflection on the weight borne by so much of suffering humanity and the unwillingness of others to render assistance, as well as action toward those who experience the paralyzing effects of that heavy load. Of special concern is how the political and economic agendas of an increasingly affluent minority leave an increasingly impoverished majority of beaten down people more and more without voice or power.

Once again, in the words of Pope Francis, “It is essential to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 210).

Indeed, in the face of the enormous challenges the current situation places before us we might be tempted to feel overburdened and paralyzed ourselves as if nothing we do can alleviate the crushing blows others experience, especially when we recognize that their cause is deeply embedded in unjust social structures. We might even be tempted to identify with the Lord who was unable to carry on, and even if we were prepared to be a willing Simon of Cyrene, we might find ourselves without the strength to climb the mountain before us.

Collect

Let us pray.

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that we, who glory in the Heart of your beloved Son
and recall the wonders of his love for us,
may be made worthy to receive
an overflowing measure of grace
from that fount of heavenly gifts.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*)

Sixth Station: True Image

Scripture:

He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain, Like one from whom you turn your face, spurned, and we held him in no esteem. (Is. 53:3)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

The mysterious image imprinted on the Shroud ought to evoke profound sentiments of compassion. The silent witness to the copious shedding of Christ's Blood which has left on this cloth its indelible stain serves as a constant reminder of the price of our redemption. The Shroud is the only relic that brings us into immediate contact with residue, so to speak, of the very Body of the Incarnate Son of God: the Body crucified, buried, and risen for our salvation. Indeed, the Shroud is perhaps the greatest testimony we have to the truth of the incarnation and redemption as historical realities and the greatest confirmation of the gospel accounts of Christ's passion, death and resurrection -- to which modern science and technology now contribute their own evidence.

Indeed, as the Russian theologian Sergius Bulgakov puts it: "Sanctifying with Himself all things, the Lord also sanctified the state of holy relics by the fact that His Most Pure Body abided in the grave for three days and three nights in the state of a holy relic, even though It later passed from this state into the state of total resurrection and transfiguration." One might say, therefore, with Bulgakov that the Body of the Lord could itself be seen as "the absolute Relic, as the Relic of relics" -- to which the Shroud of Turin stands in a secondary way as its incomparable reliquary.

Something similar might be said with reference to the Shroud as an icon. For clearly Christ himself is the absolute Icon, the Icon of icons -- the perfect "Image of the invisible God" (Col. 1: 15). Whatever might be the precise physical cause of the image left on the Shroud, it is in turn the most exact portrayal -- an image of the Image -- we possess of the Lord's humanity. This icon, moreover, is written with the very ink and painted with the very pigment of the Savior's Blood.

What might we say then of the Shroud's implications for not merely a devotional impulse of worship and compassion directed to the Person of Christ, but a spirituality that also gives rise to a manner of Christian living? I will leave to Pope Francis a first answer to this question in his own reflection on the Holy Face revealed by the Shroud: "This disfigured face resembles all those faces of men and women marred by a life which does not respect their dignity, by war and violence which afflict the weakest." In other words, the Suffering Servant of the Holy Shroud invites those who venerate it as a Relic and Icon of the Precious Blood to seek out suffering humanity in its many forms and to see there, enshrined and imaged, the One whose likeness they bear.

Collect:

Let us pray.

O God, who willed that your only-begotten Son
should become human,
and show us in his human nature a perfect image of your divinity;
grant, we beseech you,
that by venerating the image of his Holy Face
we may be united with him
in the mysteries of his Passion and Death,
and so come to contemplate forever his glorious Face
in the joy of the resurrection.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever. Amen. (*Feast of the Holy Face*)

Seventh Station: Crushed

Scripture:

But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed. (Is. 53:5)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

As we have seen, the gospels also narrate beatings about the face that Jesus suffered, whether during his trial before the Jewish authorities or accompanying his mockery by the Roman soldiers (cf. Mt. 26:67, 27:30; Mk. 14:65, 15:19; Lk. 22:63, Jn. 18:22, 19:3). The Shroud of Turin reveals the accumulated results of these beatings: “swelling of both eyebrows, a torn right eyelid, a large swelling below his right eye, a swollen nose, a triangular-shaped wound on right cheek with its apex pointing to his nose, a swelling to his left cheek, [and] a swelling to the left side of his chin. His right eye is nearly swollen shut, and his nose is twisted.”

Collect

Let us pray.

O God, who by the Passion of Christ your Son, our Lord,
abolished the death inherited from ancient sin
by every succeeding generation;
grant that just as, being conformed to him,
we have borne by the law of nature
the image of the man of earth,
so by the sanctification of grace
we may bear the image of the Man of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen. *(Good Friday)*

Eighth Station: Mourning

Scripture:

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children." (Lk. 23:27-28)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

The Man of Sorrows who, at the same time, is the Sovereign of Humanity, seeks no earthly glory. Those who sought to make him an earthly king -- whether during the satanic desert temptations, or in response to some of his miracles, or while the crowds shouted "Hosanna" as he entered Jerusalem on a donkey's foal -- were all met with a resolute renunciation of such blandishments. On the contrary, he warned his disciples more than once not to imitate the rulers of the Gentiles who lord their authority over others and held up slave-service as the Christian ideal for exercising power (cf. Mt. 20:25-26, Lk. 22:25-26). All of which was summed up in the supreme irony written on the placard hung around his neck during the way of the cross and later affixed to the gibbet: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" in the several languages of the Empire.

Of course, the disciples of Jesus, past and present, have had a hard time renouncing power and the symbols of those who wield it, everything from papal tiaras and apostolic palaces, to canonical language about "ordinary jurisdiction" that has sometimes been used to make threats of excommunication and suspension against those who may well have been announcing a prophetic word spoken in truth to power.

This is not, however, call to anarchy in the church or anywhere else. The current Bishop of Rome, who never ceases to criticize such things and whose personal demeanor and life-style exhibit just such evangelical humility as the "servant of the servants of God," this pope has been accorded more authority by "the Gentiles" than perhaps in the household of faith itself. Such is the "power" of Christ's teaching and example when put into practice.

So the human penchant for "power going to one's head" and all the resultant abuses reported in the news on a regular basis, whether in the military, in correctional institutions, in centers for troubled youth, by those in political office, those who have resorted to gun violence in homes, schools and elsewhere and finally, in the church as well - all point to the desperate need for church and society to embrace a different approach to power and authority. The Man of the Shroud, crowned with thorns, would surely want us to trade our own crowns, miters and helmets, along with our scepters, croziers and rifles, for the towel and basin with which Jesus washed the feet of his disciples the night before he was installed as King with thorns for a crown, a reed for a scepter and mockery for homage.

Collect

Let us pray.

Father, who through the Blood of Jesus your Son,
the Lamb sacrificed on the cross,
redeemed us, sanctified us, and made us your people;
grant that all may accept the gift of your love,
celebrate it joyfully in the Spirit,
and drink of it in the Eucharistic chalice,
the sign of your covenant and blessing.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Feast of the Most Precious Blood*)

Ninth Station: Collapse

Scripture:

Though harshly treated, he submitted and did not open his mouth; Like a lamb led to slaughter or a sheep silent before shearers, he did not open his mouth. (Is. 53:7)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

Those accustomed to making the Stations of the Cross have always meditated on the several falls under the weight of the cross. Too often, however, these meditations have focused almost exclusively on our individual falls and the need for perseverance in the face of personal weakness. While such thoughts have their place and value, the scope of our moral concern needs a much bigger horizon. As Pope Francis never tires of reminding us, “Our redemption has a social dimension because God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between human beings” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 178).

Collect

Let us pray.

Clothe us, Lord God,
with the virtues of the Heart of your Son
and set us aflame with his love,
that, conformed to his image,
we may merit a share in eternal redemption.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart*)

Tenth Station: Nakedness

Scripture:

Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. (Mk 15:24b)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

Despite the usual depictions of the Crucifixion where a loincloth remained in place out of a concern for modesty, victims were in fact stripped naked and left exposed on the cross as an added humiliation. When the gospel accounts speak of soldiers casting lots for Jesus' clothing, they mean all of his clothing. The Shroud of Turin bears this out as the Body wrapped in it was naked and, presumably, rose from the dead naked as well. John explicitly mentions that the shroud and the head covering were left in the tomb (Jn. 20:6-7). While Christian sensibilities might hesitate to reflect on this feature of the passion and resurrection, the nakedness of Christ has nevertheless profound significance. A hint of it is given in John's account of his burial where he includes the detail that Jesus' tomb was in a garden (Jn. 19:41) – reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. And when Paul speaks of Christ as "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45; cf. Rom. 5:14), unaffected by original sin, we are led once again to the beginnings of the human race when nakedness provoked no embarrassment (Gen. 2:25).

Collect

Let us pray.

Almighty ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow
caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross;
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. *(Sunday of the Passion)*

Eleventh Station: Nailed

Scripture:

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left (Lk. 23:33)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

As if it were needed, further evidence of the Shroud's authenticity arises from the manner in which it portrays how victims of crucifixion were affixed to the cross. For example, whereas traditional representations most often show Jesus nailed to the cross through his hands, it is now known this would be impossible as the weight of the body would not permit this and hence nailing through the wrists would be necessary to support the victim. Recent archaeological finds also suggest the nailing of the feet, contrary to traditional artistic renderings, would be done through both feet at once rather than singly. In both instances, the Shroud reveals an historical and anatomical accuracy unknown, for example, to a medieval forger.

The most recent research sheds even further light on the torture involved in both the crucifixion itself as well as the subsequent agony of hanging on the cross along with the probable cause of the Lord's death. An Italian team of researchers, reporting their findings in the journal *Injury*, has found signs the Lord suffered a double nailing of the wrists. They conjecture that the Roman soldiers "were unable to nail Jesus' hands into the holes that had already been specially punched into the cross to prevent the nails from bending when they were hammered into the hard wood. Once the first wrist was nailed to the cross they failed to nail the second one using the pre-prepared hole and so the executioners had to unnailed both wrists. They then apparently drove the nails in lower down between the two rows of carpal bones, on the ulnar side of the hand."

As for the nailing of the feet, as suggested above, the Lord's left foot appears to have been forced over his right foot. It is not clear, given this most recent evidence, whether both feet were fixed to the cross by a single nail driven through the insteps or whether the right foot might have been nailed to the cross twice. According to the Italian team of four experts, an "analysis of the imprint of the sole of the right foot shows two nails were driven into it: one between the second and third metatarsal and another at heel level which other academics had not spotted clearly."

And as for the subsequent hours of agony on the cross, the Victim would have suffered tremendous and widespread pain with even a slight movement of the limbs. His breathing would have been seriously impaired due to the method of nailing and each attempt to draw a breath and exhale as well as to speak would have caused agonizing pain.

Collect

Let us pray.

O God, who in the Heart of your Son,
wounded by our sins,
bestow on us in mercy
the boundless treasures of your love;
grant, we pray,
that, in paying him the homage of our devotion,
we may also offer worthy reparation.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. *(Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus)*

Twelfth Station: Death

Scripture:

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."^[e] When he had said this, he breathed his last. (Lk. 23:46)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

Last of all, the Shroud, in accord with the Gospel of John (which here as elsewhere demonstrates an historical accuracy no doubt due to its claim of having an eyewitness behind its testimony) reveals the Victim's legs were not broken as was customary and that his right side was pierced by a lance with an accompanying effusion of blood and clear fluid. According to the authors of the *Injury* article, "the serum stains, which are separate to the stains of blood that came from the chest and were probably caused by the stabbing with a spear after he had died, were formed as a result of bleeding in the lungs. This bleeding will have started before the crucifixion, after the violent fall which caused the cross to fall onto the Man's shoulders."

The authors have thus put forward a theory on the Lord's immediate cause of death that conflicts with others who have speculated, understandably, that the cause was asphyxia. These experts conjecture instead that "the fall and/or the flagellation have caused not only a pulmonary contusion but also a cardiac contusion. This, together with the serious clinical and mental condition the Man was in, may have led to a heart attack and a broken heart."

Collect

Let us pray.

O God, who willed that your Only Begotten Son
should undergo the Cross to save the human race;
grant, we pray,
that we, who have known his mystery on earth,
may merit the grace of his redemption in heaven.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Exaltation of the Holy Cross*)

Thirteenth Station: Removal

Scripture:

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. (Mt 27:57-58)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

As if the Shroud were not enough evidence of the truth of the several passion narratives, yet another relic of the Precious Blood has been preserved, namely the Sudarium ("sweat cloth") which covered the Holy Face, and is venerated in the Cathedral of the Savior in Oviedo, Spain. This is the head cloth mentioned by the evangelist John (20:7). The Shroud and Sudarium have been studied by researchers and comparisons have been made. Two Jewish scientists, Danin and Baruch, have stated the two cloths are "synchronatic," meaning both cloths were in contact with the same body given pollen spores present on both that are native to Jerusalem's environs, and both cloths having stains of the same, rare, AB blood type. Other anatomical features of both cloths also match exactly, e.g. the size and shape of the nose. Residue of myrrh and aloes used for the burial are also present (cf. Jn. 19:39-40). A Dr. Villalain further reports the following: "Counting both sides of the cloth, there is therefore a fourfold stain in a logical order of decreasing intensity. From the composition of the main stains, it is evident that the man whose face the sudarium covered died in an upright position. The stains consist of one part blood and six parts fluid from a pleural oedema. This liquid collects in the lungs when a crucified person dies of asphyxiation, and if the body subsequently suffers jolting movements, can come out through the nostrils. These are in fact the main stains visible on the sudarium. These stains in the nasal area are also superimposed on each other, with the different outlines clearly visible. This means that the first stain had already dried when the second stain was formed, and so on. . . . The cloth was not wrapped entirely round the head because the right cheek was almost touching the right shoulder. This suggests that the sudarium was put into place while the body was still on the cross. The second stain was made about an hour later, when the body was taken down. The third stain was made when the body was lifted from the ground about forty five minutes later. The body was lying at the foot of the cross for about forty-five minutes before being buried. The marks (not fingerprints) of the fingers that held the cloth to the nose are also visible." Presumably, the delay from death to deposition no doubt being due to the time taken to request the body from Pilate and to make the necessary preparations for burial.

Collect

Let us pray.

O God, whose mercies are without number and whose treasure of goodness is infinite,
graciously increase the faith of the people consecrated to you,
that all may grasp and rightly understand
by whose love they have been created,
through whose Blood they have been redeemed,
and by whose Spirit they have been reborn.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Votive Mass of the Mercy of God*)

Fourteenth Station: Burial

Scripture:

Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. (Mt. 27:59-60)

Invocation:

Eternal Father, we offer you the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May its almighty power free us of our sins, lead our departed sisters and brothers to eternal joy and immerse your Church in love and unity. Amen.

Meditation:

The Blood of Christ, soon to be glorified is not only efficacious in Its shedding, but also in Its circulation in the Mystical Body of Christ, that is, in us. Its Eucharistic infusion, moreover, restores flagging spirits and renews our strength to move forward on our various spiritual paths to whatever sacrifice awaits us.

We conclude these meditations on the Shroud of Turin, relic and icon of the Most Precious Blood, with a hope that the poignant testimony -- reserved for a scientific and technological age that requires signs, if not proof, in order to believe -- left inexplicably on this cloth might persuade any who doubt what the Gospels tell us of the price of our redemption to reconsider the truth of faith and shape their lives accordingly.

Let us pray.

All-powerful and ever-living God,
your only Son went down among the dead
and rose again in glory.
In your goodness
raise up your faithful people,
buried with him in baptism,
to be one with him
in the everlasting life of heaven,
where he lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
One God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Holy Saturday*)

*All quoted material is from the Shroud of Turin website @ <http://theshroudofTURIN.blogspot.com> and <http://www.shroud.com>) as well as a summary of new research on the Shroud of Turin by a team of Italian scientists whose findings appear in the medical journal *Injury* (cf. <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it>). As to the Sudarium, see <https://www.shroud.com/guscin.htm>.