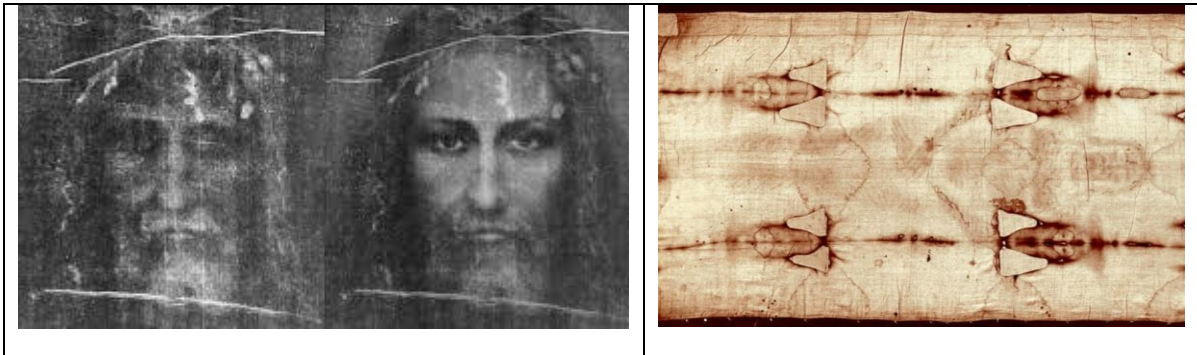


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MARIA VALTORTA READERS' GROUP THE SUPPLEMENT No. 101 – MARCH 2021



THE RELICS

The Nails and the Crown of Thorns

Mary, supported by her sister-in-law and by the Magdalene, goes down towards the Sepulchre followed by Martha, Mary of Zebedee and Susanna who have picked up the nails, the tongs, the crown, the sponge and the cane.

(*Poem*, Vol. 5, p. 628; *Gospel*, Vol. 10, p. 148)

The Linen Cloth

[Mary] bursts into tears again and kisses the linen cloth that Jesus had round His hips, and She presses it to Her heart and lulls it as if it were a baby... And She touches the nails, the thorns, the sponge and shouts: 'These are the things that your Fatherland gave You! Iron, thorns, vinegar, gall! And insults, insults, insults!'

(*Poem*, Vol. 5, p. 650; *Gospel*, Vol. 10, p. 175)

Veronica's Veil

A loud knock at the door makes everyone start but [...] it is Mary of Magdala who goes straight and resolutely to the door and asks: 'Who is it?'

The voice of a woman replies: 'I am Nike. I have something to be given to the Mother. Open! Quick. The patrol is around.'

John [...] opens the door. 'I have a thing...' says Nike weeping and she is unable to speak.

'What? What?' They are all around her, full of curiosity.

'On Calvary... I saw the Saviour in that state... I had prepared a loincloth so that He would not have to use the rags of the executioners... But He was so wet with perspiration, with blood in His eyes, that I thought I should give it to Him to wipe Himself. He did so... And He gave the cloth back to me. I have not used it again... I wanted to keep it as a relic with His perspiration and blood. [...]

With Plautina and the other Roman ladies, Lydia and Valeria, we decided to come back for fear they might take this linen cloth from us. The Romans are brave women. They put the servant and me in the middle and they protected us. [...] At home I wept... for hours... Then there was the earthquake and I fainted... When I came to, I wanted to kiss that linen cloth and I saw... oh!... The face of the Redeemer is on it!

'Let us see! Let us see!'

'No. The Mother first. It is Her right. [...] It will comfort Her. Tell Her!'

John knocks at the door lightly.

'Who is it?'

'It is I, Mother. Nike is here... She came during the night... She brought a gift... She hopes to comfort You with it.'

'Oh! One gift only can comfort Me! The smile of His Face.'

'Mother!' John embraces her lest She should fall, [...]' It is that. The smile of His Face, impressed on a linen cloth with which Nike wiped Him on Calvary.'

'Oh! Father! Most High God! Holy Son! Eternal Love! May You be blessed! The sign! The sign I asked of You. Let her, let her come in!' [...]

Nike goes in and kneels at her feet [...]. Nike does not utter one word. But she opens the casket, takes the linen cloth out and unfolds it. And the Face of Jesus, the living Face of Jesus, the sorrowful and yet smiling Face of Jesus looks at His Mother and smiles at Her.

Mary utters a cry of sorrowful love and stretches out Her arms. [...] Nike cannot find words. She hands the linen cloth over to the motherly hands and she stoops to kiss its edge. She then goes out backwards without waiting for Mary to come out of Her ecstasy [...].

Mary is once again alone in a conversation of Her soul with the image of Her Son because they all withdraw again. [...] Mary calls John.

'But look at Him, John, how handsome He is also in His sorrow!' Mary is absorbed in contemplation, with Her hands joined before the cloth, which She has spread out on a chest holding it with some weights.

'Handsome, yes, Mother. And He is smiling at you... Do not weep any more... Some hours have already gone by. There is less to wait for His return...' and in the meantime John weeps... Mary caresses his cheek. But She looks only at the image of Her Son. John goes out, blinded by his tears. The night of Good Friday is over.

(*Poem*, Vol. 5, pp. 660-4; *Gospel*, Vol. 10, p. 187)

[Ed: For an explanation of the name Nike - Veronica, refer to the # 96 Bulletin- also in our website archive]

The Items on the Supper Table

And Mary, supported by the arms of Martha and Mary of Alphaeus, goes into the Supper room.

Everything is still as it was at the end of the Supper. The course of events and the instructions given by Jesus have prevented tampering. Only the seats have been put back in their places. And Mary, who has not been in the Supper room, goes straight to the place where Her Jesus was sitting. [...] She walks round the couch, She insinuates

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Herself between it and the table [...]. She kneels down and prays with Her head resting on the edge of the table. She caresses the tablecloth, the seat, the dishes, the edge of the large tray on which the lamb was, the large knife used to carve it, the amphora placed before that seat [...].

Mary of Alphaeus sobs. 'But look! Here, you have the chalice and the bread broken by Him and used by Him for the Eucharist. Is there a holier souvenir? See? John brought them for you this morning.'

Mary says: 'I would also like a chest, a beautiful large one with a lock, to close all My treasures in it.'

'I will have it brought to you from our mansion tomorrow. It is the nicest one in the house. It is strong and safe. I give it to you with joy.' says the Magdalene promising it.

(Poem, Vol.5, pp. 648, 674-5; Gospel, Vol. 10, pp. 172, 209-10)

The Lance

Since the town is quiet, the women are not so frightened. But when, through the half-open door, they see Longinus' clean-shaven face appear, they all run away [...].

The Magdalene, who was with Mary, rushes there. Longinus, [...] is not wearing a uniform, but he has on a short grey tunic under a mantle which is also dark.

[...] Longinus asks: 'May I come in without contaminating anybody? And without terrifying anyone? This morning at dawn I saw Joseph, the citizen, and he mentioned the Mother's desire to me. I apologise for not thinking of it myself. Here is the lance. I had kept it as a souvenir of a... of the Saint of Saints. Oh! He is indeed! But it is right that the Mother should have it. With regard to the garments... it is more difficult. Do not tell her... but perhaps they have already been sold for a few coins... It is the right of the soldiers. But I will try to find them...'

'Come. She is in there.'

'But I am a heathen!'

'It does not matter. I will go and tell her, if you wish so.'

[...] Mary Magdalene goes to the Blessed Virgin. 'Mother, Longinus is out there... He offers the lance to You.'

'Let him come in.' [...]

Longinus goes in and on the threshold, he salutes in the Roman way, [...] then he greets her saying: 'Ave, Domina. A Roman greets you: the Mother of mankind. The true Mother. I would have liked not to be there at that affair but it was an order. But if I serve to give what You wish, I forgive destiny for choosing me for that horrible thing. Here.' and he gives her the lance enveloped in a red cloth. Only the steel head, not the shaft.

Mary takes it and becomes even more wane. Her very lips disappear in the pallor. The lance seems to open her veins. And her lips tremble as he says: 'May He lead you to Himself because of your kindness.'

'He was the only Just Man I ever met in the vast empire of Rome. I regret I only knew Him through the words of my companions. Now... it is late!'

'No, son. He has finished evangelizing. But His Gospel remains in His Church.'

'Where is His Church?' Longinus is slightly ironical.

'It is here. Today it is struck and scattered. But tomorrow it will gather like a tree that tidies up its foliage after a storm. And, even if there were nobody else, I am here. And the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Mine, is all written in my heart. All I need do is to look at my heart in order to be able to repeat it to you.'

(Poem, Vol. 5, pp. 677-8; Gospel, Vol. 10, pp. 209-10)

Jesus' Mantle

There is a knock at the door. Mary of Alphaeus goes out. People can be heard talking in low voices in the hall, then John looks into the room.

'John, have you come back? Still nothing?'

'Yes. Simon Peter... and Jesus' mantle... together... At Gethsemane. The mantle...' John falls on his knees and says: 'Here it is... But it is all torn and covered with blood. The marks of the hands are Jesus'. Only He had them so long and thin. But it has been torn by teeth - it is very clear that this is the mouth of a man. I think it must have been Judas Iscariot because near the spot where Simon Peter found the mantle, there was a piece of Judas' yellow tunic. He went back there... later... before committing suicide. Look, Mother.'

Mary has done nothing but caress and kiss the heavy red mantle of her Son, but, pressed by John, she opens it and sees the marks of blood, dark against the red of the Blood, and the tearing by the teeth. She trembles and whispers: 'How much blood!' She does not seem to see anything but that.

'[...] Where did so much blood come from?' [asks John]

'From His Body. In the bitter anguish... Oh! Jesus total Victim! Oh! My Jesus!' Mary weeps so distressingly, with an exhausted lament, [...]

[John explains:] 'I had gone to look for the mantle. I had thought of asking Jonah and Mark... But they have run away. The house is closed and everything has been abandoned. So I went down to the walls, to go along all the road we had gone on Thursday... I was so tired that evening and so grieved, that now I could not remember where Jesus had taken off His mantle. It seemed to me that He had it, then that He did not have it... On the spot where He was arrested there was nothing... Where we three were, nothing... I went along the path taken by the Master... And I thought that also Simon Peter was dead because I saw him there, all crouched against a rock [...]. He said: "Here. Here. To guard this Blood and His mantle. And I want to wash it with my tears. When there is no more blood on the cloth, perhaps I will go back among the living, beating my breast and saying: "I have denied the Lord!" I told him that you wanted him. That you had sent me looking for him. But he would not believe me [...]. Then he wept more calmly. He wanted to know everything. And he told me that there was still fresh Blood on the grass and that the mantle had been maltreated by Judas, of whose tunic he had found a piece. I let him talk and talk, and then I said: "Come to the Mother". Oh! how much I had to insist to convince him! [...]'

And Mary calls him kindly: '[...] Peter of Jesus and Mary, come.' A sharp burst of weeping [...]. Peter is crouched outside. [...] He realises that She is there when She bends so low as to take his hand, pressed against his eyes, and She compels him to stand up. She goes back into the room, dragging him like a little boy. She closes the door and locks it, and bent with sorrow as he is with shame, She goes back to her seat.

Peter kneels at her feet and weeps without restraint. Mary caresses his grey hair, wet with the perspiration of sorrow. Nothing but such caress until he calms down.

(Poem, Vol. 5, pp. 683-5; Gospel, Vol. 10, pp. 463-4)

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The Chest at Pentecost

The Blessed Virgin, sitting all alone on Her seat, has Peter and John at Her sides on their seats: Peter on Her right, John on Her left-hand side. Matthias, the new apostle, is between James of Alphaeus and Thaddeus. In front of Her, Our Lady has a large low chest of dark wood, which is closed. Mary is dressed in deep blue. Her hair is covered with a white veil, over which is placed the edge of Her mantle. All the others are bare-headed.

(Poem, Vol. 5, p. 882; Gospel, Vol. 10, p. 463)

Peter, the Eucharist, the First Christians & the Relics.

Peter is full of stateliness while speaking. There is no longer anything in him of the rather coarse fisherman of not long ago [...]. He has finished speaking now [...] and waits. James and Judas that is, the two sons of Alphaeus and cousins of the Christ, now lay a white tablecloth on the table. To do so, they lift the large low chest, which is on the centre of the table, and they spread a very fine linen cloth also on its lid.

The apostle, John, goes now to Mary and asks Her something. Mary slips off a kind of a small key from Her neck and gives it to John. John takes it, goes back to the chest, opens it, letting down the front panel which is laid on the table and covered with a third linen cloth.

Inside the chest, there is a horizontal partition that divides it into two sections. In the lower section there is a chalice and a metal plate. In the upper section, in the centre, the chalice used by Jesus at the Last Supper and for the first Eucharist, the remains of the bread broken by Him, laid on a small plate as precious as the chalice. On the sides of the chalice and of the small plate laid on it, on one side there is the crown of thorns, the nails and the sponge. On the other side, one of the shrouds, rolled up, the veil with which Nike wiped Jesus' Face, and the one that Mary gave Her Son to gird up His loins. At the bottom, there are other things, but as they remain rather concealed and no one speaks of them or shows them, it is not known what they are. The other ones, instead, and which are visible, are shown to the people present by John and Judas of Alphaeus, and the crowd kneels in front of them. But neither the chalice nor the small plate of the bread are touched or shown, nor is the Shroud unfolded, but only the rolled cloth is shown, saying what it is. Perhaps John and Judas do not unfold it in order not to awake in Mary the sorrowful memory of the cruel tortures suffered by Her Son.

When this part of the ceremony is over, the apostles in chorus intone some prayers, I should say some psalms [...]. The chorus of the apostles is joined by the crowd [...]. At the end they bring some bread that is laid on the small metal plate, which was in the lower section of the chest, and also some small amphorae, which are also of metal.

John, who is kneeling on the other side of the table (whereas Peter is always between the table and the wall, but facing the crowd) hands the tray with the bread to Peter, who raises it and offers it. He then blesses it and lays it on the chest.

Judas of Alphaeus, who is also kneeling beside John, in his turn, hands Peter the chalice of the lower section and the two amphorae that were previously near the small plate of the bread, and Peter pours their contents into the chalice, which he then raises and offers, as he had done with the bread. He blesses also the chalice and lays it on

the chest beside the bread. They say more prayers. Peter breaks the bread into many morsels while the people prostrate themselves even more, and he says: 'This is My Body. Do this is memory of Me'.

He comes out from behind the table, taking the tray full of the morsels of bread, and as first thing, he goes to Mary and gives Her a morsel. Then he goes to the front of the table and hands out the consecrated Bread to all those who approach him to have it. A few morsels are left over, and still on their tray, they are laid on the chest.

He now takes the chalice and offers it, always beginning from Mary, to those who are present. John and Judas follow him with the small amphorae and they add the liquids when the chalice is empty, while Peter repeats the elevation, the offering and the blessing to consecrate the liquid.

When all those who asked to be nourished with the Eucharist are satisfied, the apostles consume the bread and wine left over. Then they sing another psalm or hymn after [which] Peter blesses the crowd who, after his blessing, go away little by little.

Mary, the Mother, who has always remained on Her knees during the whole ceremony of the consecration and the distribution of the species of the Bread and Wine, stands up and goes to the chest. She bends across the large table and, with Her forehead, She touches the upper section of the chest, where the chalice and the small plate used by Jesus at the Last Supper are laid, and She kisses the edges of them. A kiss that is also for all the relies gathered there. Then John closes the chest and hands the key back to Mary, who puts it again round Her neck.

(Poem, Vol. 5, pp. 888-90; Gospel, Vol. 10, pp. 470-2)

The Shroud

It is night-time [...] at the little house of Mary and John. Everything is silent. [...] All of a sudden, a rustling of sandals can be heard [...] and with it, the whispering of some deep masculine voices. Then three people [...] knock at the door [...]. John's, asks: 'Who are you?'

'Joseph of Arimathea. And with me are Nicodemus and Lazarus. The hour is indiscreet. But prudence has forced it on us. We have brought something for Mary, and Lazarus has escorted us. [...]

'What is it?' asks Mary, growing pale. 'His garments, perhaps? The one I made for Him for...' She says weeping.

'At no price could we find them anymore. Who knows how and where they ended up!' replies Lazarus. And he adds: 'But this is also His garment. His last one. It is the clean Shroud in which the most pure Lord was enveloped after His torture and after the purification, although hurried and relative of His members, soiled by His enemies, and the summary embalming. When He rose, Joseph took both away from the Sepulchre and brought them to us at Bethany to avoid any sacrilegious abuse of them. Jesus' enemies will not dare too much in Lazarus' house [...]. Then after the first days, the most dangerous ones, we gave You the first Shroud, and Nicodemus got the other and took it to his country house. Nicodemus' house is out of town, so it does not strike the eye so much and it is safer for other reasons.' Joseph replies to Her.

'Yes, particularly since Gamaliel with his son pays frequent visits to it.' adds Nicodemus.

'Gamaliel!?' exclaims Mary much surprised.

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Lazarus cannot help smiling sarcastically while he replies to Her: 'Yes. The sign, the famous sign that he was waiting for to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, has shaken him [...]. And he goes to Nicodemus to reach the aim that he is now determined to reach.'

[...Nicodemus explains:] Then, with regard to the Shrouds, since I am no longer a Hebrew and consequently, no longer subject to the prohibition of Deuteronomy concerning carved images and castings, I was thinking of making a statue of Jesus crucified, as best I can - I will use one of my gigantic cedars of Lebanon - and of concealing one of the Shrouds inside it, the first one, if You, Mother, will give it back to us. It would always distress You too much to see it, because the filthiness with which Israel struck the Son of its God is visible on it. Further, certainly because of the shocks it received when descending from Golgotha, shocks that continuously shifted that tortured Head, the image is so confused that it is difficult to distinguish it. But that cloth, although the image is confused and it is dirty, is always dear and sacred to me because on it, there is always some of His blood and perspiration. Hidden in that sculpture, it will always be safe because no Israelite of the high castes will ever dare to touch a sculpture. But the other one, the second Shroud, which was on Him from the evening of Preparation Day until the dawn of the Resurrection, must come to You. And [...] You must be informed that the more the days passed, the more clearly His image appeared, as He was after being washed. When we collected it from the Sepulchre, it seemed that it simply retained the impression of His members covered with the oils, and, mixed with them, the drainage of blood and serum from the many wounds. But either through a natural process or, which is much more certain, by a supernatural will, a miracle of Him to give joy to You, the more time passed, the more precise and clear the impression has become. He is there on the cloth, handsome, imposing, even if wounded, serene, peaceful, also after so many tortures. Have You the courage to see it?'

'Oh! Nicodemus! That was My supreme desire! You say that His appearance is peaceful... Oh! to be able to see Him thus, not with the tortured expression that is on Nike's veil!' replies Mary, joining Her hands against Her heart.

Then the four shift the table to have more room; then, as Lazarus and John stand on one side, Nicodemus and Joseph on the other, they slowly unfold the long cloth. The dorsal side appears first, beginning from the feet; then after the quasi-junction of the heads, the front side. The lines are very clear, and clear are the signs, all the signs of the scourging, crowning with thorns, rubbing of the cross, bruises caused by blows received or by falls, and the wounds of the nails and of the lance.

Mary falls on Her knees, She kisses the cloth, She caresses those impressions, She kisses the wounds. She is distressed, but visibly happy to be able to have that supernatural miraculous image of Him.

When She finishes venerating it, She turns and says to John: 'It was you who told them, John. You alone could tell them because you alone were aware of this desire of Mine.'

'Yes, Mother, it was I. And I did not even have time to inform them of Your desire, that they agreed to it. But they have had to wait for a suitable moment to do so...'

'That is, a very clear night, in order to be able to come without torches or lamps, and a period of time without the festivities that assemble crowds and notables here in Jerusalem and nearby places. And that out of prudence...' explains Nicodemus.

'And I have come with them for greater safety. As the owner of Gethsemane, I was able to come and see this place without shocking the eyes of anyone... commissioned to watch everything and everybody' says Lazarus concluding.

'May God bless you all. But you have spent the money for the Shrouds... And that is not fair...'

'It is fair, Mother. I, from the Christ, Your Son, have received a gift that no money can buy: life given back to me after four days in a sepulchre, and before that, the conversion of my sister Mary. Joseph and Nicodemus have had from Jesus the Light, the Truth, the Life that does not die. And You... You, with Your sorrow of a Mother and Your love of the Most holy Mother for all men, have purchased for God, not a cloth, but the whole Christian world that will always be greater and greater. There is no money that can compensate You for what You have given. So take this, at least. It is Yours. And it is just that it should be so. Also Mary, my sister, thinks so. That has always been her opinion since the moment that He rose and even more since He left You to ascend to His Father.' Lazarus replies to Her.

'Then let it be so. I will go and get the other one. In fact it grieves Me so much to see it... This one is different. This one gives peace! Because here He is serene, in peace by now. In His mortal sleep, He already seems to be feeling the Life that is coming back and the glory that no one will ever be able to strike and demolish [...]. And may God give you one hundred times as much joy as you have given Me.'

She takes the Shroud reverently, after the four have folded it, She goes out of the kitchen and quickly climbs the little staircase... And She soon comes down again and comes in with the first Shroud, which She hands to Nicodemus, who says to Her: 'May God reward You, Woman. [...].' The three venerate Her before going out.

(Poem, Vol. 5, pp. 900-5; Gospel, Vol. 10, pp. 483-91)

The Chest after the Assumption

[After the death and Assumption of Mary into Heaven], John now gathers, in a piece of cloth, the flowers and branches that were still on the little bed. He adds to them those that he had gathered outside and lays them all on the cover of the chest. He then opens it and puts the little pillow of Mary and the coverlet of the little bed into it. He goes down into the kitchen, he collects other utensils used by Her - the spindle and distaff and Her kitchenware - and adds them to the other things.

He closes the chest and sits on the stool exclaiming: 'Now everything is accomplished also for me! Now I can go freely wherever the Spirit of God will lead me.'

(Poem, Vol. 5, p. 938; Gospel, Vol. 10, p. 532)

[Ed: We are truly blessed to have knowledge of these relics through Maria Valtorta's writings and possession of some of these today but as Stuart Chase once said:

'For those who believe, no proof is necessary.'

For those who do not believe, no proof is possible.'