

## Mass in Piazza San Carlo

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with her priests. In giving us the new commandment, Jesus asks us to live his own love and on his own love, which is the truly credible, eloquent and effective sign for proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom of God to the world.

Clearly, with our own strength alone we are weak and limited. In us there is always a resistance to love and in our existence there are very many difficulties that cause division, resentment and ill will. However, the Lord promised us that he would be present in our lives, making us capable of this generous, total love that can overcome all obstacles, even those in our own hearts.

If we are united to Christ, we can truly love in this way. Loving others as Jesus loved us is only possible with that power which is communicated to us in the relationship with him, especially in the Eucharist, in which his Sacrifice of love that generates love becomes really present: this is the true newness in the world and the power of a permanent glorification of God who is glorified in the continuity of the love of Jesus in our love.

I would therefore like to say a word of encouragement especially to the Priests and Deacons of this Church, who dedicate themselves generously to pastoral work, as well as to the men and women Religious. Being a labourer in the Lord's vineyard can sometimes be tiring, duties increase, there are so many demands and problems are not lacking: may you be able to draw daily from this relationship of love with God in prayer the strength to transmit the prophetic announcement of salvation; refocus your existence on what is essential in the Gospel; cultivate a real dimension of communion and brotherhood in the

presbyterate, in your communities, in your relations with the People of God; bear witness in your ministry to the power of love that comes from on high, that comes from the Lord present in our midst.

The First Reading we have heard presents to us precisely a special way of glorifying Jesus: the apostolate and its fruits. Paul and Barnabas, at the end of their first apostolic voyage, return to the cities they have already visited and give fresh courage to the disciples, exhorting them to remain firm in the faith for, as they say, "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Christian life, dear brothers and sisters, is not easy; I know that difficulties, problems and anxieties abound in Turin: I am thinking in particular of those who currently live in precarious conditions, because of the scarcity of work, uncertainty about the future, physical and moral suffering. I am thinking of families, of young people, of elderly people who often live alone, of the marginalized and of immigrants.

Yes, life leads to confrontation with many difficulties, many problems, but it is precisely the certainty that comes from faith, the certainty that we are not alone, that God loves each one without distinction and is close to everyone with his love, that makes it possible to face, live through and surmount the effort of dealing with daily problems.

It was the universal love of the Risen Christ that motivated the Apostles to come out of themselves, to disseminate the word of God, to spend themselves without reserve for others, with courage, joy and serenity.

The Risen One has a power of love that overcomes every limit, that does not stop in front of any obstacle. And



The Holy Father is greeted by Cardinal Poletto

the Christian community, especially in the most pastorally demanding situations, must be a concrete instrument of this love of God.

I urge families to live the Christian dimension of love in simple everyday actions – in family relationships, overcoming divisions and misunderstandings; in cultivating the faith, which makes communion even stronger.

Nor, in the rich and diverse world of the university and of culture, should there be a lack of the witness to love of which today's Gospel speaks in the capacity for attentive listening and humble dialogue in the search for Truth, in the certainty that Truth itself will come to us and catch hold of us.

I would also like to encourage the frequently difficult endeavours of those called to administer public affairs: collaboration in order to achieve the com-

mon good and to make the City ever more human and liveable is a sign that Christian thought on man is never contrary to his freedom but favours a greater fullness that can only find its fulfilment in a "civilization of love".

I wish to say to all, and especially to the young: never lose hope, the hope that comes from the Risen Christ, from God's victory over sin, hatred and death.

Today's Second Reading shows us precisely the final outcome of Jesus' Resurrection: it is the new Jerusalem, the Holy City that comes down from Heaven, from God, adorned as a bride for her husband (cf. Rev 21:2).

The One who was crucified, who shared our suffering – as the sacred Shroud also eloquently reminds us – is the One who is Risen and who wants to reunite us all in his love.

It is a marvellous, "strong" and solid hope, because, as Revelation says: "[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (21:4).

Does not the Holy Shroud communicate the same message? In it we see, as in a mirror, our suffering in the suffering of Christ: *Passio Christi. Passio hominis*.

For this very reason the Shroud is a sign of hope: Christ faced the Cross to stem evil; to make us see, in his Pasch, the anticipation of that moment when, even for us, every tear will be wiped away, when there will no longer be death, mourning or lamentation.

The passage from Revelation ends with this assertion: "And he who sat upon the throne said: 'Behold, I make all things new'" (21:5).

The first absolutely new thing made by God was Jesus' Resurrection, his heavenly glorification. This is the beginning of a whole series of "new things" in which we also have a share. "New things" are a world full of joy, in which there is no more suffering and oppression, there is no more rancour or hate, but only the love that comes from God and transforms all things.

Dear Church in Turin, I have come to you to strengthen you in the faith. I would like to urge you, forcefully and with affection, to remain steadfast in that faith which you have received, that gives meaning to life and that gives the strength to love; never to lose the light of hope in the Risen Christ, who can transform reality and make all things new; to live out God's love in a simple, practical way in the City, in its districts, in communities, in families: "As I have loved you, that you also love one another".

## Botany of the Shroud: a Jewish professor's findings

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so that "the high similarity of the face of the Man of the Shroud to an icon of 'The Pantocrator' in the St Catherine Monastery, Sinai, takes the Shroud back to 550 CE".

What the botanist calls "the holographic era" of sindonology began in 2007. This involved his collaboration with Dr Petrus Soons, who was responsible – along with his collaborators in the Dutch Holographic Laboratory in Eindhoven – for the creation of three-dimensional holograms of the Shroud. During this period Danin was able to observe that there is "an almost continuous carpet" of more than 300 flowering heads that were arranged in an orderly fashion on the forehead of the "Man of the Shroud".

Another discovery resulting from his work with Soons was that it was a helmet – not a crown – of thorns that was used to torture the Man. Soons explained that "when he created life-size holograms and displayed them in Regina Apostolorum in Rome, they had to take a ladder to see the top of the head. This part of the body of the Man of the Shroud had not been seen by anybody before". There Soons observed many small wounds that had been bleeding, whereas these wounds were not visible on the forehead.

The theological significance of Danin's conclusions is immense. Each of these scientific observations recall



A peduncle carrying 3 fruits of "Pistacia lentiscus" compared with an illustration of a stem in *Flora Palaestina* (1972). Circled area indicates location, found above the head of the "Man of the Shroud"

Christ's suffering: his Passion and Crucifixion as they were recently commemorated in the Catholic Church worldwide. Danin's research – accompanied by that of other sindonologists – can help to reveal a physical reality that points to a transcendent truth: that of Christ's death and Resurrection. Studies like his help to identify a tangible connection with those mysteries that stretch far beyond the capacity of the human mind.

In the words of Pope John Paul II: "The Shroud shows us Jesus at the moment of his greatest helplessness and reminds us that in the abasement

of that death lies the salvation of the whole world" (*Address, Pastoral Visit to Vercelli and Turin, 24 May 1998*). Indeed, when Christians speak of the Shroud, they speak of the very cloth that was wrapped around the only human ever to break the chains of death. It is a concrete record of his extraordinarily temporary state of death – the "mystery of Holy Saturday", as Benedict XVI called it during his Visit on Sunday.

And as his Venerable Predecessor said years ago, "The Shroud thus becomes an invitation to face every experience, including that of suffering and extreme helplessness, with the attitude of those who believe that God's merciful love overcomes every poverty, every limitation, every temptation to despair".