

Encouragement for priests at Mass in Piazza San Carlo, Turin

# For a more human city

Pope expresses concern for the unemployed, the marginalized, families and immigrants

On Sunday, 2 May, the Holy Father's 10-hour Visit to Turin was his first Pastoral Visit in Italy this year. He was accompanied by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State; Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Dean of the College of Cardinals; and other Ecclesiastical authorities. The Pope's main reason for going to Turin was to visit the Holy Shroud whose exposition he himself had announced in 2008. He also came, as he said, to strengthen the Church in Turin in the faith. In this Piedmontese city Benedict XVI gave five

Discourses at four meetings with the faithful. After an hour's flight from Rome's Ciampino Airport, he landed at Sandro Pertini di Caselle Airport, where he was met by Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin, and other Church dignitaries. The first event at which the Pope presided was Mass in Piazza San Carlo, overflowing with more than 50,000 people, followed by the recitation of the Regina Caeli. The following is a translation of the Pope's Homily, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am happy to be with you on this festive day and to celebrate this solemn Eucharist for you.

I greet everyone present and in particular the Pastor of your Archdiocese, Cardinal Severino Poletto, whom I thank for his warm words to me on behalf of all. I also greet the Archbishops and Bishops present, the priests, the men and women religious and the representatives of the Ecclesial Associations and Movements.

I address a respectful thought to Hon. Mr Sergio Chiamparino, the Mayor, with gratitude for his kind greeting, to the representatives of the Government and to the civil and military Authorities, with special thanks to those who have generously offered their cooperation for this Pastoral Visit. I extend my thoughts to those who are unable to be present, especially the sick, the lonely and all those in difficulty.

I entrust the City of Turin and all its inhabitants to the Lord in this Eucharistic celebration, which, as it does every Sunday, invites us to partake as a community in the twofold banquet of the Word of truth and the Bread of eternal life.

*"Jesus gave himself to us as a model and source of love – a boundless, universal love that could transform all negative circumstances and all obstacles into opportunities to progress in love"*

We are in the Easter Season which is the time of Jesus' glorification. The Gospel we have just heard reminds us that this glorification is brought about in the Passion. In the Paschal Mystery, passion and glorification are closely

bound together and form an indissoluble unity.

When Judas leaves the Upper Room to carry out his scheme of betrayal that will lead to the Master's death, Jesus says: "now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified" (Jn 13:31): the glorification of Jesus begins at that very moment.

The Evangelist John makes it quite clear: he does not in fact say that Jesus was glorified only after his Passion, through his Resurrection; rather he shows that precisely with the Passion his glorification began. In it Jesus manifests his glory, which is the glory of love, which gives itself totally. He loved the Father, doing his will to the very end, with a perfect gift of self; he loved humanity, giving his life for us. Thus he was already glorified in his Passion and God was glorified in him.

But the Passion – as a very real and profound expression of his love – is only a beginning. This is why Jesus says that his glorification is also to come (cf. *ibid.*, 13:32). Then, when he announces his departure from this world (cf. *ibid.*, 13:33), the Lord gives his disciples a new commandment, as it were a testament, so that they might continue his presence among them in a new way: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34). If we love each other, Jesus will continue to be present in our midst, to be glorified in this world.

Jesus speaks of a "new commandment". But what is new about it? In the Old Testament, God had already given the commandment of love; but this commandment has become new now because Jesus makes a very important addition to it: "As I have loved you, that you also love one another".

What is new is precisely this "loving as Jesus loved". All our loving is preced-

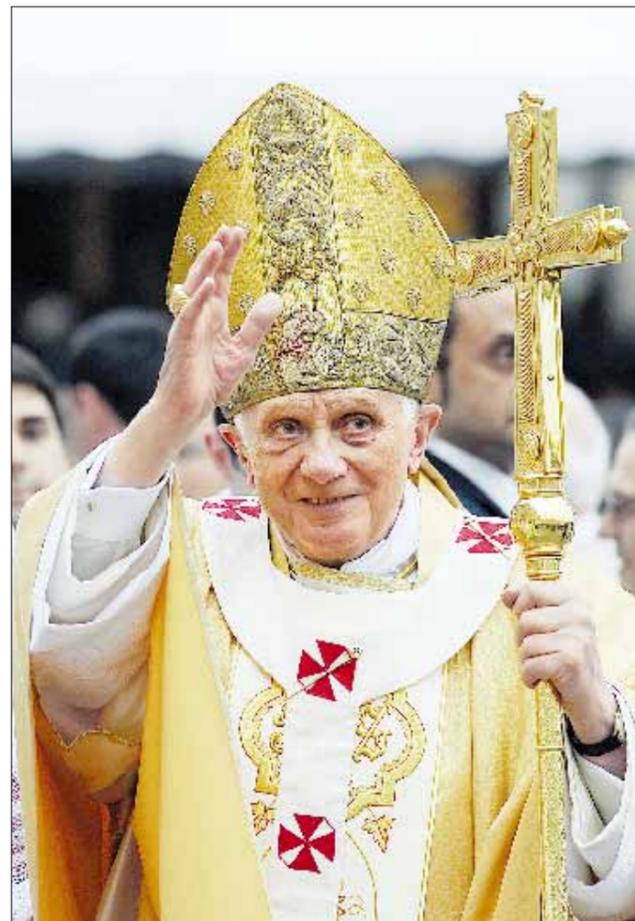
ed by his love and refers to this love, it fits into this love and is achieved precisely through this love.

The Old Testament did not present any model of love; it only formulated the precept of love. Instead, Jesus gave himself to us as a model and source of love – a boundless, universal love that could transform all negative circumstances and all obstacles into opportunities to progress in love. And in this City's Saints we see the fulfilment of this love, always from the source of Jesus' love.

In past centuries, the Church in Turin had a rich tradition of holiness and generous service to the brethren – as both the Cardinal Archbishop and Mr Mayor pointed out – thanks to the work of zealous priests and men and women religious of both active and contemplative life and faithful laypeople.

Jesus' words thus acquire a special resonance for this Church of Turin, a generous and active Church, beginning

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Regina Caeli following Mass

## From Mary we learn to recognize the Face of God

At the end of the celebration of the Eucharist in Piazza San Carlo, on 2 May, the Holy Father commented briefly on Our Lady, the principal Patron of Turin, before leading the recitation of the Regina Caeli. The following is a translation of the Pope's Reflection which was given in Italian.

As we are about to conclude this solemn celebration, let us turn in prayer to Mary Most Holy, who is venerated in Turin as the principal Patron Saint, with the title of Our Lady Consolata.

To her I entrust this city and all who live in it. O Mary, watch over the families and over the world of work. Watch over those who have lost their faith and hope. Comfort the sick, the prisoners and all the suffering. O Help of Christians, sustain the young, the elderly and people in difficulty. O Mother of the Church, watch over the Pastors and over the entire community of believers so that they may be "salt and light" in society.

The Virgin Mary is the one who, more than any other, contemplated God in the human face of Jesus. She

saw him newborn, when she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; she saw him just after he died, when, having been taken down from the Cross, he was wrapped in a shroud and carried to the tomb.

Impressed within her was the image of her tortured Son, but this image was subsequently transfigured by the light of the Resurrection. Thus, in Mary's heart the mystery of the Face of Christ was preserved – a mystery of death and of glory. From her, we can always learn to look at Jesus with love and faith, and to see in that human face the Face of God.

With gratitude I entrust to the Most Holy Mother all who worked to prepare my Visit and for the Exposition of the Shroud. I pray for them and I pray that these events may promote a profound spiritual renewal.



A significant work by Jewish professor Avinoam Danin

## Botanical findings tell story of the Shroud

TANIA MANN

Over 1.7 million pilgrims have already booked their visit to the first public exposition of the Shroud of Turin in 10 years. But is the piece of cloth that so many visitors are flocking to see really the same one that was wrapped around the dead body of the man Jesus Christ? While many have questioned the Shroud's true origin, one small book by a widely-respected Jewish botanist provides strong evidence of its authenticity.

In only about 100 picture-filled pages, Prof. Avinoam Danin – professor emeritus of the Department of Evolution, Systematics and Ecology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem – tackles the ambitious goal of answering every question he has ever been asked during his 14 years of research on the Shroud. His book *Botany of the Shroud: The Story of Floral Images on the Shroud of Turin* (Israel 2010: Danin Publishing, pp. 104) clearly outlines the steps which led Danin to reach a set of highly significant conclusions.

As Danin explains, what has occurred on the Turin Shroud is similar to the process of drying flowers between the pages of a book. Hundreds of plant images have remained imprinted on the cloth. These images thus help to determine facts pertaining to where and when the flowers could have originally been strewn across it. Also decipherable are the images of: nine thorns (most of which appear around the head and shoulders) a reed laid alongside the body of the "Man of the Shroud", as he is called; approximately 2,600 fruits that were spread over the body; and partial images of a rope or cord.

The author's research on the Shroud began when he was shown enhanced photographs of it in 1995. At first glance, he immediately recognized the images of plants from the Jerusalem area. The list of this prolific writer's accomplishments in the field of botany – specifically pertaining to plants in the Middle East – is extensive. Suffice it to say that his 44-year-long career has involved discovering plant species never before found in Israel, Sinai and Jordan; and his work has enabled the creation of a data base from which a new phyto-geographical map of Israel was drawn.

Danin's first conclusion from his botanical findings is that, since the plant images appear in the same locations on photographs produced by different photographic techniques and on the linen of the Shroud itself, they must be real and not artefacts created by one photographic method or another. Of the hundreds of flower images, Danin focused his research on those which are most useful as geo-

graphic indicators, as well as on those with the most specific blooming times. He concludes that "the area where the assemblage of the three indicator plants could be freshly collected and placed on the Shroud near the man's body is the area of Jerusalem to Hebron". As for flowering seasons, he deduces that "March-April is the time of year when the whole assemblage of some 10 of the plants identified on the Shroud is in bloom".

Regarding the thorns, Danin suspects that they belong to the plants *Ziziphus spina-christi* and *Rhamnus lycioides*, "an important historical indicator". Both of these are considered among the "most ferocious" plants in Israel, and the thorns of the latter were once "used by Arab farmers to make the 'knife' of the plough", he said.

The cord images on the Shroud show that the ropes were made from



Model demonstrating how the flowers of the plant "Anthemis bornmuelleri" would have been arranged on the Shroud

plant fibres using the same ancient method that has been used for thousands of years in Jerusalem. This cord is believed to be the one with which Christ was tied to the Cross.

For the Jewish botanist, sindonology – the study of the Shroud – has always been an intriguing endeavour from a botanical forensic perspective, but Danin says he is completely detached from any religious significance the Shroud might possess. Recounting a conversation he had in 2000 with the then-Apostolic Nuncio of Jerusalem, Danin writes: "I described to him my excitement upon first seeing on the Shroud itself the plant images that I had seen on photographs. I said that I did not feel any particular emotion towards the object revered by millions... I was a bit apologetic when I was telling him about it. He told me to keep on with my work, because if I were not a Jewish but a Christian botanist, only a few people would believe me".

Since then, Danin's years of work as a sindonologist have led him to conclude that the burial cloth already existed in the 8th century CE, and al-

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