

April 9, 2021

Good Morning All,

The Divine Mercy Novena continues:

[How to Recite the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy | The Divine Mercy](#)
[The Chaplet of The Divine Mercy Novena - Day 8 | The Divine Mercy](#)

1. Today's Readings: [Friday in the Octave of Easter | USCCB](#)

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: Yesterday's article talked about the cloth covering Jesus' head in the tomb. Today's article features a cloth in Italy reported to be that head covering.

3. Quote of the Day: "We can truly say that God was given a human face, that of Jesus, and henceforth, if we really want to know God's face, we have only to contemplate the face of Jesus!" *Pope Benedict XVI*

St. Joseph, Pray for Us!

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The Rediscovery of God's Face

Book Argues Authenticity of Cloth of Manoppello



“A gripping cultural thriller” is the assessment of the German magazine Der Spiegel.

It’s referring to “The Face of God,” a book by the German journalist and historian Paul Badde that recounts his fascinating quest to uncover the truth behind the Holy Face of Manoppello.

He describes it as a kind of “logbook of the discovery from the beginning” – a vivid and engaging account of how he and a small number of experts came to “rediscover” the Holy Face which they claim to be the authentic Veil of Veronica (true icon), one of the many names for the cloth allegedly found in Christ’s empty tomb by the apostles Peter and John.

Exhibited in a church in Manoppello, a small town in Italy's Abruzzo region, it bears the mysterious image of a man's face on byssus cloth, or sea silk — a fabric so thin and delicate that it's impossible to paint on. Yet the image of a bearded, almost dreamy face, marked by wounds, is clearly visible from both the front and back. It possesses a luminous quality and an expression that changes depending on the direction of the light. It also has the exact same dimensions as the face imprinted on the Shroud of Turin.

"It can't be painted, there's no trace of color on it and yet it somehow looks painted," Badde tells ZENIT in his apartment near the Vatican. "It's completely inexplicable."

The first person to claim it as the Holy Face was German Jesuit Heinrich Pfeiffer in 1999. His first theory coincided with local tradition: that the image was stolen from the Vatican in the disputed process of the construction of the new Basilica of St. Peter's, sometime between 1506 and 1606. But since then, he and others believe it disappeared during the Sack of Rome (1527) and found its way to Manoppello. He also believes that the image derived from forces unleashed by the Resurrection — forces which, he says, also cast an imprint of a body on the Shroud of Turin. From the very beginning, both cloths have been classified as "acheiropoietos" — Greek for images "not made by man's hand."

It's here where the story becomes most fascinating. The discoverers of the Holy Face claim the reason why Peter and John became convinced of the Resurrection was because Peter saw the Holy Shroud (among other cloths, collectively called "othonia" by John) on a raised area on the right side of the tomb. "Separate from these cloths," and therefore probably on the lower, left side of the tomb, was what John called the "soudarion" — the thin veil with the Holy Face. Mary Magdalen was the first to discover the empty tomb and was upset and ran to the apostles. But when Peter and John hurriedly returned in the early dawn, they reacted differently.

Badde poses the question why. "Peter wasn't smarter, he wasn't braver, yet she ran away saying they've taken him away," he points out. The rediscoverers of the Holy Face claim it was because Peter saw the luminous cloth in the tomb, and not any other object (including the Shroud) in that part of the grave because of such poor light (when Mary Magdalen entered earlier, it was too dark to see even the

soudarion). Such a theory is plausible, Badde believes, “if you take the Gospel seriously, take these objects seriously, take the structure of the tomb seriously, and then the hour and the light.”

Another, perhaps more crucial point, is if the Holy Face is so pivotal to the apostles immediate realization of the Resurrection, why has it been hardly discussed in the course of history? Badde points out the importance of religious purity to the Jews and that, to them, objects from a tomb are always impure. Had it therefore become public knowledge to the Jews that such an object was being venerated, the apostles would have been hounded out and may not have survived to form the first Christian communities. (Badde recalls that in the Gospels, when Jesus returned to visit their home, they kept the doors locked because, he believes, they were afraid they’d be seen with this image which was “absolutely unbearable” to the other Jews).

A further key aspect of the Holy Face is its connection with the Shroud of Turin. “The two images fit as one, as a single seal,” Badde says, and stresses that the dimensions of the face match exactly – a discovery made by another German researcher, Sister Pascalis Shlömer, an iconographer. “These are the first [Gospel] texts, and they’re complementary texts,” he says. “The Shroud talks about the Passion; this talks about the Resurrection.”

For this reason, he won’t accept talk of an empty tomb — even from the Holy Father. After the Pope referred to it as such in Jerusalem last year, Badde wrote to him, stressing that John never spoke of an empty tomb because there were items in it.

Benedict XVI visited the Holy Face in Manoppello in September 2006 and is reputed to be a strong advocate of the image and the discoveries. Throughout his pontificate, he has stressed the importance of contemplating the face of Christ, and traveled to see the image despite some stiff resistance in the Vatican – also recalled in Badde’s book. During that trip, the Holy Father talked about the importance of being transformed “by the radiance of his face.”

His visit was a direct consequence of Badde’s book, first published in German in 2004 and now updated for its first English edition. “The last time I saw Joseph Ratzinger before he became Pope, I was carrying out the rubbish near our apartment, and he said he’d seen my article in September 2004 and congratulated

me. We were neighbors," Badde remembers. "After he'd read my book, he decided to visit Manoppello, one of the first trips of his pontificate." Both Badde and Benedict XVI were this year given keys by the mayor of the town, which has been transformed since the papal visit and now receives hundreds of pilgrims from all over the world.

But not everyone is convinced of the findings. Some have dismissed Fr. Pfeiffer's theories as fiction. Others contend that despite claims of divine origins, the Holy Face is a man-made image in the style of the late Middle Ages or early Renaissance. One writer has even suggested the face is in fact a lost self-portrait by the artist Albrecht Dürer. A further objection is that the image does not bear a familial resemblance to other historical copies of Veronica's Veil, although Badde refutes the claim in his book by showing illustrations of images made prior to 1608 with facial expressions just like the Manoppello image.

Naturally, he stands fully behind its claims to authenticity. "I am completely convinced," he says, "For me it's an enormous confirmation of the truth of Jesus and the teaching of the Church." He also sees it as a bridge between Eastern and Western Christianity (Manoppello is located close to Pescara harbor that looks toward Greece) and therefore of ecumenical importance. And he views its rediscovery as providential for modern times. "It really is sensational, especially for the New Evangelization," he says. "Pilgrims will now begin to discover it."

Another mystery surrounding the image is why so many Germans have been involved in its discovery and promotion. Badde puts it down to divine Providence, possibly compensation for Germany's role in creating today's alienated and highly secular society. "We had the Reformation that opened the doors to the last iconoclasm," he says. "Marxism was born in Germany, in Germany they stripped the Churches."

Another German went to visit the image recently. Badde took his friend Peter Seewald, who interviewed the Pope for the new book 'Light of the World', and says he was profoundly moved. "He stood in front of the face, turned to me and said: 'No one told me he's laughing,'" Badde recounts. "I told him he's laughing because you came here." After this encounter Peter Seewald dedicated the first Italian copy of his book to the Capuchin Friars of Manoppello, calling the Face of God the "Light of the World."

Badde is aware some see the image as bland, almost comical — not the high art one would expect if drawn by the divine hand. Badde says he doesn't reject outright what the skeptics are saying, but highlights the variety of reactions of those who've seen it. "Some are immediately struck by it, for others it's a process," he says. "I've seen many tears there, I've seen people laughing, some just take pictures with their iPhone — all the reactions are different."

And all the while the mystery of just how this image came to appear on such a fine fabric continues to confound scientists. A few years ago on German television, Badde offered €2 million to anyone who can make a copy of it. "So far no one has come forward," says Badde. "It's just impossible to write on the material and also reproduce the liveliness of the image."

The English edition of 'The Face of God – The Rediscovery of the True Face of Jesus' is published by Ignatius Press.

Source: zenit.org