

Searching the face of Jesus



Whenever I'm in a Catholic Church for the first time, I rarely ever leave without making a pilgrimage to the Sixth Station – Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. Every station is a meditation on what Jesus suffered during his passion. And this is far from the only station where there is interaction with others. But there is something about Jesus being consoled by this woman that I want to participate in with my life.

Could my little sacrifices, pathetic as they are, do that for Jesus in even a minuscule way? Could he be gazing at me even in his most bitter pain, knowing I love him, even if I have the worst ways of showing it sometimes? Does he want me to see that this is his mercy? This is what love is. His passion, death and resurrection explain everything. Nothing makes sense without it. And our endless Quixotic quest for security and a life without suffering – could it end here with this Good Friday and Easter Octave? Once and for all?

This is what I was thinking about as I walked through “Mystery and Faith: [The Shroud of Turin](#)” exhibit currently at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. The exhibit was quite Catholic, as some of its framings came from papal remarks. Quotes included St. John Paul II calling the shroud a “mirror of the Gospel.”

When he visited Turin, Italy, in 1998, he said: “As I entered the cathedral ... I paused in [adoration](#) before the Eucharist, the sacrament which is the focus of the Church's attention and, under humble appearances, contains the true, real and substantial presence of Christ. In the light of Christ's presence in our midst, I then stopped before the Shroud, the precious Linen that can help us better to understand the mystery of the love of God's Son for us. Before the shroud,

the intense and agonizing image of an unspeakable torment, I wish to thank the Lord for this unique gift, which asks for the believer's loving attention and complete willingness to follow the Lord."

The shroud is a gift that can bring us closer to Christ. Even the exhibit, which seeks to tell the story of the shroud, is an encounter with Jesus. I wondered if it can be especially powerful for a non-Catholic who has not encountered the [Real Presence](#) and Jesus in the sacraments of the Church.

But even for me, not being able to head to Turin, a few hours before daily Mass on an early morning travel day, I found myself remembering why I was running around in the first place. To seek to serve Jesus.



Capuchin Father Paolo Palombarini, parochial vicar of the Shrine of the Holy Face, explains the compatibility between the Holy Face of Manoppello, left, and the Shroud of Turin, center, while showing copies of the relics in the museum at the shrine in Manoppello, Italy in 2019. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

In Turin, Pope John Paul II said: “The image of human suffering is reflected in the shroud. It reminds modern man, often distracted by prosperity and technological achievements, of the tragic situation of his many brothers and sisters, and invites him to question himself about the mystery of suffering in order to explore its causes. The imprint left by the tortured body of the Crucified One, which attests to the tremendous human capacity for causing pain and death to one’s fellow man, stands as an icon of the suffering of the innocent in every age.”

On my last trip to Rome before COVID-19, German journalist Paul Badde talked with me about the [Holy Veil of Manoppello](#). If you line up the shroud with the veil, you see the same man, but in the shroud, he is dead, and in the veil, he is healed. He believes the veil exists to help us believe the Resurrection.

At Manoppello in 2006, Pope Benedict XVI said: “Seeking the face of Jesus must be the longing of all of us Christians; indeed, ‘we are the generation’ which seeks his face in our day, the face of the ‘God of Jacob.’ If we persevere in our quest for the face of the Lord, at the end of our earthly pilgrimage, he, Jesus, will be our eternal joy, our reward and glory forever.”

As we move beyond Lent, let us continue in earnest on this journey to his face, gazing on the holy face of Jesus in the Passion and the Resurrection as Veronicas and Simons and Mary Magdalenes and the apostles. As the sons and daughters of God.

Kathryn Jean Lopez is a senior fellow at the National Review Institute and editor-at-large of National Review.