

THE RELICS OF THE HOLY SUFFERING.

March 22, 1899 God's goodness has wanted to preserve for us, as a memorial of the bitter suffering of the Savior, numerous relics: cross-wood, crown of thorns, column of scourging, etc.

5 To a certain extent, that wood of shame and those instruments of torture have shared in the glorification that was bestowed upon the scourged and crucified Jesus: for centuries they have been venerated by millions as the most precious treasures and handed down with the most sacred care. Some further details about these remarkable relics will be heard with interest, especially in these days.

10 It took three centuries before the most important relic, the cross-wood, came into the possession of the faithful. All that had served to execute the three death sentences had been buried near Mount Calvary; and in order to make it impossible for Christians even to visit these holy places, a temple had been built over them in honour of Venus. The desire for possession of the sacred ground and the relics hidden therein remained, however, alive; and as soon as the period of persecution was ended, the Emperor Constantine, who had learned the power of the cross in his victory over Maxentius, had the temple demolished and the relics exhumed.

15 Pious tradition relates to us the circumstances of this finding of the cross. Helena, the mother of Constantine, is said to have received from God himself, in a dream vision, the command to seek the relics. The task was certainly difficult, but the pious empress spared nothing, spared neither effort nor expense, and even came to Jerusalem to conduct the investigations in person. She saw her efforts rewarded. The cave of the Holy Sepulchre was found, and a little to the east of it the three crosses, nails and inscription. The latter lay loose, so that there was no sure sign to distinguish the cross of the murderers from that of the Savior. However, they firmly trusted that God would help them in this also; and on the advice of Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem, the crosses were brought to a terminally ill woman in the city. In the presence of the empress and a large crowd of people, she was allowed to touch the crosses. She reached out her hands to two in vain, but when she touched the third, a miracle of God suddenly restored her to health.

20 Where would the precious relic be preserved from now on, was now the question. Jerusalem could certainly lay claim to that honor, but the emperor, and the whole West, were also eager for that treasure, and so we see that it was immediately divided. A part of it was sent to Constantine; the largest, however, remained

25 provisionally in Jerusalem, where it was preserved, set in silver, in the Basilica, which was erected by Macarius above the Holy Sepulchre.

30 When the cross was begun to be divided still further, cannot be determined precisely. Probably, however, one could not have resisted for long the desire of so many to possess a portion, however small, of the holy wood. The ecclesiastical writers of the end of the 4th century at least already tell us how in their time those particles, set in gold casings or capsules, were worn by men and women as precious things around neck and breast; how fortunate the Christian communities considered themselves when they had such a relief in their midst, and how they then often bore witness to their pious reverence by building a separate chapel or church. Up to our time, this

35 division into ever smaller particles has continued, so that now most churches possess such a relic. Quite large pieces are in the possession of the church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem in Rome, the Notre Dame of Paris and the Notre-Dame of Bruges.

40 In the great number of these relics unbelievers have found a reason to suspect their authenticity. Already Erasmus mocked the inexhaustibility of the relics, which made one suppose a cross as large as a warship. Completely wrongly, however. Most

45 particles are no larger than 1 to 2 cubic millimeters, and now an accurate calculation has shown that the many thousands of pieces together would only form a piece of wood of 9 or 10 million cubic mm. The cross now had a length of about 3 or 4 m (it must have stood at least 3/4 m in the ground); the crossbeam will have been

50 about 2 m, and if one now calculates the width at 12 and the thickness at 8 cm, then the cross would certainly have had a content of 50 to 60 million cubic m. Even if three quarters had escaped attention in calculating the particles, the large number would not have presented the slightest difficulty.

55 Near the cross were also found the nails that had pierced Jesus' hands and feet. These nails were said to have been sent to the emperor, who had one put in the bridle of his horse, and one in his helmet, to fight in war always under God's protection. A third nail is said to have been thrown into the Adriatic Sea by Helena (or perhaps only immersed in it), to calm a violent storm. So tells us a reliable tradition, but what happened to it after that, we cannot find out. Probably, however, they did not stay long in Constantinople, but were soon taken to the West. There the so-called nail of the Iron Crown of Italy has acquired its greatest fame. This crown, with which the emperors were crowned in the Middle Ages, which Napoleon also put on his head in 1805, when he had himself crowned as King of Italy, is still kept at Monza

near Milan. The actual golden crown, which consists of six pieces, is held together by a strip of iron, and according to the age-old, very credible tradition, the iron of one of the nails is said to have been forged for that purpose. Another nail is preserved in the Basilica of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem in Rome. This one is 12 cm long and 8.5 mm thick at the wide end. (With the point it would have a length of about 16 cm) It is square and the head, which is riveted around it, has a somewhat hat-shaped shape. The nail preserved in Trier has much in common with that of Rome. Many other cities boast of having nails, and because of the large number one would almost conclude that there is a certain pious deception. Yet this is absolutely not necessary. How can this be explained? We know that small parts of nails, even a little filing, were already considered a treasure. Such particles or filings were then sometimes placed in imitation nails, as in a reliquary: and such an imitation nail, which then contained at least a part of a real nail, was also considered a treasure and venerated. The same church of the Holy Cross in Rome possesses another remarkable relic, namely an important part of the inscription on the cross. It is a small plank full of worm-marks, of oak or poplar wood. It is 235 mm long and 130 wide. The parts of the Latin and Greek inscription are clearly visible, while from above, where the plank is broken off, some hooks and lines can be seen, which resemble the lower parts of Hebrew letters. The middle one the Greek word Nazarenous, the lower one the Latin Nazarenus Re. (The x of rex = king has been omitted.) The letters are little hollowed out in the plank; they are red on a white background, and as they have a size of 28 to 30 mm, they must have been clearly legible to the witnesses of the crucifixion. It is peculiar that the letters, according to the Eastern writing method, are placed from right to left, so that, as in mirror writing, they appear reversed. Calculated from this fragment, the entire inscription must have had the size of 65 by 20 cm.

95 March 11, 1913 Sacred memories.

— Now that in this early Easter month it is already approaching the feast days, a list seems appropriate, where the faithful Catholics keep their sacred memories of Jesus and his death on the cross.

100 Christ's skirt was offered as a gift by Charlemagne to the monastery of Argenteuil, near Paris.

The "seamless garment" was donated by Saint Helena to the church in Trier. and other gases, and thus, depending on the intensity of the contact with the shroud, could, as it were, evoke a negative image of the body.

105 Dr. Vignon was able to prove this hypothesis plausible by means of an experiment. Not with a corpse (this experiment is still awaiting execution) but by placing the hand moistened with ammonia on a cloth treated with aloe. The result was the same as with the Shroud of Turin.

110 Thirty years ago, Dr. Vignon pointed out that a chemical impression that at first sight seems insignificant can produce a good photographic image, especially with objects with a strong relief. Vignon has now again called upon the art of photography to establish all kinds of peculiarities on the Shroud: clots of blood, streams of blood-water, traces of the flogging, the crown of thorns and human secretions.

No modern method of research has been neglected by Dr. Vignon.

115 We hope to be able to report further details about the result of Dr. Vignon's research soon.

August 17, 1933 Theft of relics

PARIS, August 17 (Reuter). The 1400 year old embalmed foot of Saint Victor, dating from the 5th century AD, was stolen from the church of Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet, as well as a copy of the crown of thorns, which contained 8 small relics, each of which was said to contain a piece of the real crown of thorns of Christ.

120 The crown of thorns was made of gilded copper, in which the foot of Saint Victor. The thieves probably mistook this copper for gold.

January 31, 1936 THE HOLY SHROUD OF CHRIST

Remarkable results of a scientific investigation.

125 The Passion of the Savior.

In the cathedral of Turin the Holy Shroud is kept, in which the most holy body of Christ was wrapped after the descent from the cross. For years, scientists have investigated the authenticity of this precious relic. The result of these investigations has now been summarized in a book by the Czech physician Dr. R. V. Hynek, which has also been published in German these days, and which bears the title: "The Martyrdom of Christ in the Light of Modern Science. The Discovery of the True Image." After long and scientific investigations, using all the resources of modern technology, such as chemistry, photography, physiology, ultra-violet and infrared rays, it has been concluded that the relic preserved in Turin is really the Holy

135 Shroud, in which the body of Christ was wrapped for about 36 to 42 hours. The main proof lies in the fact that the images in the shroud are absolutely negative, that is to say, as from a photographic plate, on whose sensitive layer the projected image is captured. It could be clearly established that these prints could not have been applied later. Dr. Hynek has investigated this problem extensively and has

140 specifically investigated how it was possible that an impression of the corpse could have been created. He comes to the following conclusions: According to the Bible story, the shroud was sprinkled with aloe and myrrh, which were changed by chemical action into an insoluble dye of aloetin, which soaked the linen. Sweat, blood, uric acid, everything containing urine salts, which are formed during the decomposition of the corpse, are changed by chemical action into ammonium carbonate and ammonia, which then chemically binds the substance of the aloe. The dye was therefore preserved on the linen, not on the body, which formed a kind of sensitive chemical layer on the shroud.

145 From an in-depth examination of the imprints in the shroud, the author attempts to reconstruct a complete picture of the suffering of Christ. The blood traces of the crown of thorns indicate an arterial hemorrhage, without these tissues being torn too much. On the body were clearly visible the traces of numerous wounds of about 3 cm in length, which were visible two by two, 80 in total, which corresponds to the 40 lashes that were customary among the Romans. From the impressions of the wounds that

150 occurred at the crossing, the conclusion can be drawn that the nails were not driven through the middle of the hand, but through the carpal; while the arms were already stretched out, the feet were nailed completely in the middle of the instep. From the investigation it has further been established, the cause of death by which Christ

155 died: Death occurred by suffocation, as a result of tetanic cramps, under very great pain and with full consciousness; it has been anatomically proven that with prolonged extension of the arms, especially when they are nailed to a cross, an obstruction of breathing is caused by the unusual effort of the diaphragm, which finally leads to suffocation, suffocation, zyanosis, which causes a blue color. It is very remarkable how these medical investigations completely agree with the Bible story.

165 January 28, 1937 The true image of Christ discovered
 Under this title, the firm J. Romen & Zonen in Roermond has published the Dutch translation of a book in which the Czech physician W. Hynek, by way of positive experimental science, tries to provide proof that the Holy Shroud of Turin, an antique linen cloth 4.36 m long and 1.10 m wide, shows us the true, original image of the dead body of Christ. This relic would really be the burial linen in which the blessed body of the Redeemer was wrapped after the descent from the cross, to be laid in the grave.

The author of the corner relies in his argument on the photographs taken by Giuseppe Enrie of the shroud and its parts, when it was exhibited in the year 1931.

175 Dr. Hynek studied the impressions that are visible on the sharp photographs of the Shroud of Turin, mainly from the standpoint of anatomical and medical science, in which the photographic recordings formed an inviolable basis. In fact, he followed in the footsteps of Paul Vignon, who in 1902 already defended the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Turin in his work "Le saint Linceul de Turin". Vignon also built his argumentation with evidence of a positive scientific nature. The argumentation of Hynek's new book is not much more than a repetition and supplement of the argument that was already provided 35 years ago by Vignon and his associates. Hynek, like his predecessor, takes the position that the imprints of the body of Christ on the shroud of Turin, both of the front and of the back of Christ's figure, were not caused by blood and sweat, which adhered to the linen as dyes, but that the aloe, one of the components of the perfume that was sprinkled in the shroud at the funeral, was converted by the alkaline efflux of the body into an insoluble dye: aloetin. By chemical action an imprint of the Body of Christ was thus created, a double imprint of the front and back. The body was first placed on the shroud and then the remaining part of the very long cloth was folded over the head. The remarkable thing is that the impressions in the grave linen are pure negatives; this must be attributed to the chemical process that took place in the shroud covered with perfume. Exceptions are, however, the bloodstains of the nail wounds in the hands and feet and the large bloodstain of the heart wound, caused by the spear. These stains are simply positive impressions. In Hynek's work, which was written from the first to the last page with ardor and enthusiasm and with a warm love for the Holy Wounds of the Redeemer, it is not only proven beyond doubt that the Shroud of Turin is genuine, that is, that the dead body of Christ was wrapped in this linen cloth, but from the photographs made by Enrie of the Shroud, Hynek also reads off what the facial features of the Lord were, how the Redeemer was scourged, in what way he was crowned with thorns, how he was nailed to the cross and how the heart wound was inflicted by the spear. Hynek even claims that now the problem of the exact and immediate cause of death of the

205 crucified Jesus has been solved and that the mystery of the water that flowed with the blood from the heart wound of the Redeemer has lost all its mystery. The phenomena that occur in the stigmatized person of Konnersreuth are incidentally compared with the impressions of the Shroud of Turin for confirmation. And with all this exact scientific argument a sensitive lyricism is mixed, which involuntarily carries the reader along to the conviction that speaks from every page of the book: that the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Turin has now finally been sufficiently, indeed evidently, proven. In the chapter "Possible Objections" the author even goes so far as to attribute a lack of humility and meekness to those who do not give in to his argumentation.

210 In the face of this work by Hynek, an admonition to caution is perhaps appropriate, now that it has been published in Dutch and is going to stir up emotion among deeply religious readers in our country, as it has already done beyond our language borders. The question of the authenticity or otherwise of the famous relic, which is preserved in Turin and is the property of the royal house of Italy, is treated very one-sidedly in this book. Evidence obtained by way of positive experimental science should at least be supplemented with historical data and with statements from Christian 215 antiquity. The data from the gospels should also be given their due. Now Hynek has not entirely overlooked these sides of the question of the authenticity of the shroud of Turin, but he has not shed sufficient light on them at all.

220 What can be read in the Gospel of John about the burial linen of the body of Lazarus (11, 44) and of the body of Jesus (19, 40; 20, 6-7) will always remain a very serious argument against the authenticity of the shroud of Turin. Christian antiquity then teaches us that in the first centuries no original image of the Redeemer was known at all. Hynek finds this centuries-long silence about the Shroud of the Lord 225 astonishing. Perhaps it is even dangerous for his position. The history of the relic itself is not all that rosy either: the author could tell us much more about it than he actually does. Let his argumentation, based on accurate photographic images and on data from modern positive science, be as strong, at least apparently - we admit - it still remains daring to defend the authenticity of this relic in such a triumphant and almost challenging way. The matter is too delicate for that. And after the 230 publication of this article we are still as far as we were in 1902, when with the same argumentation and with the same fervor the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Turin was defended by Paul Vignon, while Ulysse Chevalier then appeared in the arena 235 with his work "Etude critique sur l'origine du S. Suaire", to combat authenticity. Both writers then found a broad following for their opinion. On the side of the opponents of authenticity, among others, the Bollandists positioned themselves.

240 The state of the problem has not actually changed at present. That is why we consider caution to be appropriate here. One should not be carried away by the noble intentions and enthusiasm of Dr. Hynek. The German edition of Hynek's book was edited by P. Gächter S.J. as follows in the "Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie": "This study has been circulated with quite a lot of fuss, entirely in accordance with 245 the high enthusiasm that dominates it. It is a pity, however, that this storm of enthusiasm here and there leads the author away from the paths of extractive scientific proof... The explanations that are given of the photographic data are not convincing. The sober criticism still stands, as before, on the position that Ulysse Chevalier indicated: we are still dealing here, according to the statement of a 250 document from the year 1389, with an artificially painted cloth.

255 And we still attach significance to the decision of the Congregation of Indulgences of 18 Nov. 1670, according to which, in the case of public veneration of the Holy Shroud, the permitted indulgence could not be earned by those who unconditionally venerated the relic as the true grave cloth of Christ".

260 This assessment by P. Gächter S.J. is very sharp and severely negative. We have mentioned it here to show that Hynek's book entitled "The true image of Christ discovered" should be read soberly and calmly. If one takes up the book in this mood, it will still remain interesting and captivating. It certainly gives us a clearer insight into the problem of Jesus' suffering and into the passion story of the Gospels.

W. VAN DE RIET.

January 11, 1939 THE CROWN OF THORNS RELIQUIY OF PARIS.

265 For the first time in 700 years, the Reliquie will leave the city.

This year it is seven hundred years ago that the magnificent reliquary of the crown of thorns was received in Paris. In 1239 this reliquary, which had been given as a gift by the King of Jerusalem John of Brienne to the French King, St. Louis, was brought to the Sainte Chapelle. Later this relic was transferred to Notre Dame in Paris, where it now rests in a single crystal shrine.

270 In solemn procession the precious relic will be brought back to Sens and Villeneuve

by Cardinal Verdier himself with great pomp, where Louis first received the relic. These ceremonies will take place in Ju next and especially in Sens great festivities will be organized. After the ceremonies the relic will be brought back to Paris. This is the first time in seven centuries that the relic has left the French capital.

275 April 6, 1939 AMSTERDAM.

Precious relic of Crown of Thorns and Holy Cross.

Transferred from Constantinople to Amsterdam.

280 Centuries-old possession of the Testa family. A well-known Catholic Amsterdamer, Mr. K. V. Testa, recently came into possession of a very precious relic, consisting of a thorn from the Crown of Thorns and a fragment of the Holy Cross, set in a precious gilded silver reliquary, which has been part of his family's possession for many centuries, but which was kept in Constantinople until recently.

285 Mr. Testa wanted to make the relic, which was brought to Amsterdam by the "Hertog Hendrik" after a training voyage that this ship undertook in the Mediterranean in 1935, available to one of the Amsterdam churches, which will receive it on loan.

290 To this end, Mr. Testa has recently placed the relic in the hands of His Eminence Mgr. J. P. Huibers, Bishop of Haarlem, who will establish the authenticity of the precious relic, after which the relic will be given on loan to one of Amsterdam's churches. It has not yet been determined which church will be considered for this and

295 Mr. Testa, whom we asked about this, did not want to comment on this either.

For centuries, the double relic of the Holy Thorn and the Holy Cross has been part of the family property of the Testa family, which originates from Genoa and in the past occupied an important place at the court of the Turkish Porte.

300 The relic came into the possession of the Testa family as early as 1660. This was 295 during a great fire that ravaged Constantinople in that year and in which very many buildings and also all the churches except one were destroyed by the fire. During this fire, one of the members of the Testa family, Frans Testa, saved the relic at the risk of his life from the St. Franciscus Church in Constantinople, where it was kept. In addition to the reliquary, Frans Testa also managed to save a ciborium with

305 Holy Hosts from the flames. The ciborium was returned to the clergy after the fire, but the reliquary remained in the possession of the rescuer, who did not want to return it. This led to a conflict with the clergy of the church to which the relic originally belonged and with the head of the Brotherhood of St. Anne, which was connected to the St. Francis Church. Finally, the judgment of Rome was invoked in

310 this conflict. The case was dealt with by the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, which after an extensive investigation concluded that the relic would remain the property of Frans Testa, who had saved the reliquary from the flames at the risk of his life. This officially recognized the ownership of the precious relics of the

315 Testa family. The first owner of the relic died in 1709. After his death, it passed to his son Caspar, who in turn left it to his son, who was also called Frans. In 1784

the authenticity of the relics, which had already been officially confirmed earlier, was again established by the Papal legate in Constantinople, Mgr. François Antoine

320 Frachia. After the death of Francis Testa the relics were inherited by his son Charles, who in 1803 had the authenticity of the relic once again established by an official ecclesiastical authority, namely the Archbishop of Constantinople, Mgr. Jean

325 Baptist de Fonton. In later years the reliquary came into the possession of one of his descendants, who settled in Montpellier, in the South of France. The reliquary remained there after his death, in 1876, where it was kept by the widow of this Antoin, who only later gave it to the eldest nephew of her deceased husband, Charles Testa, in Constantinople, the father of the present owner of the relic. Karel Testa

kept the relic until his death in 1911, after which it was loaned to the Minorite

330 monastery in Constantinople, which had been its rightful owner before 1660. The relic was kept there until 1935. In the last year, however, Mr. K. Testa in Amsterdam, who had inherited the relic from his father, decided to have the precious relic brought to Amsterdam. To this end, he contacted the Dutch naval chaplain, Father I. A. P.

335 Albada Jelgersma, who would be taking part in a training voyage of Hr. Ms. "Hertog Hendrik" in the Mediterranean that year. He asked him to collect the relic in Constantinople and bring it to Amsterdam on board the "Hertog Hendrik". In advance, contact had been made with the Minorite monastery in Constantinople, where at that

time a Dutch priest, Father V. Bruine O.F.M., was staying, who prepared the transfer of the relic. Although the Minorite monastery would have liked to keep the relic, it nevertheless fully recognized the rights that the Amsterdam owner claimed to it. The transfer of the relic took place with some ceremony at the beginning of February 1935. A Holy Mass was celebrated in the Minorite church on Sunday morning, which was attended by the Catholic members of the crew of the "Hertog Hendrik". After this ceremony, the reliquary was transferred to Father Jelgersma. In the meantime, the authenticity of the relics had once again been officially recognized by the delegate of His Holiness the Pope in Constantinople, Mgr. Rotta. The documents relating to

340 this were provided with the signature and seal of the papal delegate, enclosed in the lid of the reliquary, which was then also sealed. The reliquary itself was also packed with all precautions and provided with the seal of the apostolic vicariate at Constantinople.

345 It was stipulated that this seal could only be broken in the presence of the bishop of the diocese where the owner of the relic resides or by the dean of his place of residence, when he was officially authorized to do so by the bishop. Thus the return journey to the homeland was begun. During this journey, however, the naval chaplain was struck by illness, so that he was forced to seek medical treatment in Catania (in Sicily). He was therefore unable to continue the journey to England. The commander of the "Hertog Hendrik", captain at sea C. E. L. Helfrich, was however prepared to take care of the relic and to deliver it personally to the owner. In this way the reliquary came into the possession of Mr. K. V. Testa in Amsterdam, who kept it sealed in his home for several years. Recently, however, Mr. Testa decided to lend the relics to one of the Amsterdam churches, where they could be openly venerated. In connection with this, Mr. Testa turned to His Eminence Mgr. J. P. Huibers, who

350 recently received the sealed package containing the reliquary.
 355 Soon the lid of the shrine, which is made of beautifully worked gilded silver, will be opened by a goldsmith, after which the bishop will check the official documents enclosed in this lid, which relate to the authenticity of the relics. At the same time, the glass enclosing the relics, which appeared to be cracked when the package was opened, will be replaced by a new one under supervision. Only then will a decision be made about which church in Amsterdam the relics will be given on loan to. Mr. Testa has contacted one of the pastors in the capital. If we are well informed, the precious relic will soon be given on loan to one of the parish churches on the edge of the city. The decision about this has yet to be made. It had been hoped that the relic would be given the destination that the owner had intended on Good Friday. The repairs that still need to be made to the pedestal will, however, take so much time – everything is being done under the personal supervision of Mgr. Huibers – that it will probably be after Easter.

370 August 10, 2017 Double relic of the Holy Cross and the Crown of Thorns of Christ
 In the right side wall of the Agnes Church, right next to the baptismal chapel, there is a niche in which a reliquary with a double relic is placed. The reliquary contains a Holy Thorn from the Crown of Thorns of Christ and a splinter of the Holy Cross.
 In 1660, this shrine with relics was saved by Frans Testa from the burning St. Francis Church in Constantinople. Since then, the relic has been in the possession of the Testa family. In the 19th century, the shrine ended up in Montpellier (Southern France), but in 1911 it was transferred back to Istanbul. In 1935 the reliquary was transferred to Amsterdam, the then place of residence of the Testa family. Since then this shrine with double relic has been in our church. Today, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, we carried it around in procession and everyone could personally venerate the relic.

380
 385 June 17, 1939 THE CROWN OF THORNS OF PARIS.
 Great ceremonies in France on July 2nd
 With great solemnity the day will be commemorated in France on July 2nd, on which seven hundred years ago the precious relic of the Holy Crown of Thorns was received by the French King, St. Louis, in Villeneuve.
 390 On the occasion of this commemoration we will give some details about the remarkable history of this Holy Relic. In the centre of Paris is the magnificent building of the "Sainte Chapelle" with its famous stained glass windows, and the guide who will show you around will tell you that this chapel was built to house the precious relic of the Holy Crown of Thorns. For quite some time, however, the relic was no longer in this chapel, but in the treasury of the nearby "Notre Dame" of Paris.
 The Crown of Thorns of Paris, which lacks several thorns that were donated to other churches in the Middle Ages, has a diameter of 21 centimetres. The crown was wider than the head of Christ, because people wanted to press the thorns into the flesh.
 395 The thorns come from a thorn tree, called the "Zizyphus spina Christi" that comes from Syria and is common in the Jordan Valley. The tree can grow to a height of 5 to 6 metres and has strong and sharp thorns that can cause terrible wounds. The question naturally arises: how did the crowning with thorns take place? Probably not according to a predetermined plan. Probably the soldiers, as usual, made a fire from the
 400 branches of the thorn tree, and then wove a crown from a few remaining branches. This crown was probably taken by a soldier and handed over to one of Jesus' disciples.
 A few centuries of silence about the crown with thorns now follow, and it is not until the year 409 that the crown is mentioned by Paulinus of Nola. It was originally kept in Jerusalem, and probably transferred to the basilica of Mount Zion in
 405 Byzantium in the year 1063. Emperor Alexis Commenius I speaks about it in a letter to

Robert, Duke of Flanders, in the year 1100.

From the fourteenth century a testimony has come down to us of the Belgian Jean de Mandeville, who declared that he had seen with his own eyes the Crown of Thorns of Paris (consisting of the branches, of which most of the thorns had been broken off) and the thorns of this crown, which were in Constantinople, and according to him were intended to be distributed to "grand seigneurs" (great lords). In the year 1238 Baldwin II, Emperor of Constantinople, had come to France to ask for support for the strengthening of his power. In doing so he gave the Thorns to St. Louis, King of France.

415 However, he did not have this crown of thorns with him, and when some Dominicans set out to fetch the Crown of Thorns in Constantinople, they discovered that the crown had been pawned to the Venetians by high officials of the Emperor, who was in dire financial straits.

420 They returned to France and obtained permission from the king to repay the pledge to the Venetians, after which they could take the Crown of Thorns, which was already in the treasuries of San Marco in Venice.

425 And when the French king heard that the precious relic was on its way to his country, the king and his court went to meet the bearers. He met them in Villeneuve in the diocese of Troyes and received the relic there. On 11 August 1239, the king arrived with the relic in Sens and eight days later reached Paris. In order to preserve the precious relic, St. Louis had the "Sainte Chapelle" built, where the Crown of Thorns was preserved until the French Revolution. In 1791, the relic was transferred to Saint Denis, in 1799 it was confiscated and finally transferred to the National Library.

430 On 26 October 1804, the relic was handed over again to the Archbishop of Paris, who had it brought to Notre Dame in August 1806, where it is preserved to this day. The arrival of the Crown of Thorns in Paris, seven centuries ago, will be commemorated on 2 July in Villeneuve. The commemoration ceremonies will be attended by Cardinal Verdier, Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Oerlier, Archbishop of Lyon and Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec. Also present will be the Papal Nuncio, Mgr. Valerio de Valeri, and more than twenty Archbishops and Bishops will be present. The official commemoration is placed under the high patronage of the French President, Albert Lebrun.

March 22, 1940 The Passion Relics

440 The closer we come to the great days before Easter, the more we look up to the objects that remind us of the suffering Christ.

The most precious Relics, which also enjoys the greatest veneration in the Church, is the Holy Cross. It was found in Jerusalem between 320 and 345. According to the Holy Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem, it was already divided into numerous particles in 347.

445 Whether all the blessed cross particles are genuine, is however doubtful. In no case is the large number of Particles a proof against their authenticity. It has been calculated that the cubic content of all the cross particles together amounts to approximately 9 to 10 million cubic millimeters, while a cross of 3 to 4 meters high has a volume of 57 million cubic mm.

450 According to tradition, the inscription on the cross and the nails were also found at the same time as the Holy Cross. The inscription is now preserved and venerated in the basilica of Santa Croce in Rome. Its great age is proven by the fact that it was originally placed above the triumphal arch of the basilica, which was decorated with mosaics by Emperor Valentinian (423-445). The inscription itself was only added at a later time.

No fewer than 30 nails are venerated as relics.

Queen Theolinda is said to have had one placed in the famous "iron crown" that is preserved in Monza.

460 The crown of thorns is said to have been brought to Constantinople at the end of the 6th century. King Louis the Saint of France came into possession of the crown of thorns and brought it to Paris. Some thorns were broken off and distributed as relics. Whether these thorns, which are venerated in various places, are genuine, is however a great question, since it has been concluded that they are made of different types of wood and it is not known what type was used by the dead soldiers.

465 A much discussed relic is the grave cloth or linen cloth in which the Holy Body was wrapped when it was laid in the grave. There are more than 40 relics of this name, of which of course only one can be genuine. The grave cloth, which is preserved in Turin and belongs to the crown treasures of the Italian Royal House, made and still makes the greatest claim to authenticity.

470 A relic that is more famous than the grave cloth is the cloth of St. Veronica, which is certainly not genuine, but is only an old highly venerated image of the Holy Face of Christ. The column of scourging is already mentioned in the reports of the oldest pilgrims to Jerusalem. Part of it is preserved in the Chapel that belongs to the

Church of the Sepulchre, another part in Rome.
475 In Rome there is also the so-called "Holy Stairs", which has 28 steps and is said to have been brought to Jerusalem in the 9th century or according to others already by St. Helena and on which the Savior is said to have descended to the place of punishment after the scourging. However, there is no historical proof of this, although the fact that the stairs are made of Tyrian marble leaves open the
480 possibility that they were once in a palace in Jerusalem. The Holy Stairs are climbed on one's knees, as is well known.
The question of the authenticity or falsity of all these relics has nothing to do with the principles of faith. Yet there are memorable memories connected to these objects, and they are sanctified by the veneration that has been shown there by the
485 faithful for centuries.

August 21, 2024 DEAR PAUL
THE DOUBLE RELIC IS STILL IN THE AGNES CHURCH
THANKS FOR THIS INTERESTING INFORMATION
IT IS A DOUBLE RELIC: A PART OF THE HOLY CROSS AND A NEEDLE OF THE CROWN OF THORNS
490 THESE WERE SAVED BY A FAMILY MEMBER OF MINE FROM A BURNING CHURCH IN CONSTANTINOPLE
IN 1660
AND SINCE THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE TESTA FAMILY'S POSSESSION, I AM AT THE MOMENT THE
CURRENT "CUSTODION"
HERE A NUMBER OF IMAGES
495 GREETINGS ANDRE TESTA

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4 February 2025 Amsterdam, Baarn, Wapse 4 February 2025
The Testa Relics
Dear family members and friends,
505 In 1660, our ancestor François Draco Testa risked his own life to save a reliquary containing a thorn from the Crown of Thorns of Jesus Christ, as well as a wooden fragment of the Holy Cross from his parish church in Constantinople, which was on fire.
The Pope decided - in gratitude for this heroic act - that these relics would come
510 into the possession of the Testa family. Over the centuries, Testa family members have ensured that these church treasures could be venerated by believers and shown to interested parties.
In 1935, the then owner Karl Victor Testa - with the help of the Minister of Defence L.N. Deckers and the naval vessel Hr. Ms. Duke Hendrik - transfer these relics from
515 Constantinople to Amsterdam. And then he loaned them to his parish church, St. Agnes Church.
In 1968, his widow Elisabeth Testa-Baroness van Wijnbergen transferred ownership of the reliquary to Jonkheer André Testa. Due to his advanced age, he will now transfer the relics in turn to his niece Noepy Beckers-Testa.
520 This ceremony will take place on Sunday 30 March 2025 in the Jubilee Year of the Catholic Church and also the year of the celebration of the 750th anniversary of the city of Amsterdam.
On this occasion, we would like to invite you to a solemn and sung Holy Mass in the Basilica of St. Nicholas at Prins Hendrikkade 73 in Amsterdam.
525 Immediately after that, Noepy will in turn loan these church treasures to the Diocese of Haarlem-Amsterdam and store them in the St. Nicholas Church, one of the oldest churches in Amsterdam.
The reliquary will then be permanently on display in the Basilica for churchgoers.
530 Approximately 200,000 (international) visitors visit the church each year, where relics of St. Nicholas can also be seen.
The Holy Mass begins at 10 o'clock sharp with a procession in which the reliquary containing the relics is carried into the church under the guidance of the Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam, Mgr. Jan Hendriks, Pastor of St. Nicholas Basilica Eric Fennis, Pastor of St. Agnes Church Martin Kromann Knudsen, acolytes, altar boys, members of
535 the Holy Military Constantinian Order of St. George, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta.
For a look inside the church: www.nicolaas-parochie.nl/digitale-tour/
The choir Capella Nicolai and the organist of the Basilica will enhance the Eucharistic celebration: <https://muziekindenicolaas.nl/koren/>

540 Afterwards we cordially invite you to a short reception in the former "waiting room 1st class" of the Central Station. The distance from the Basilica is 82 meters. Home - Restaurant 1st class and for Location & Contact - Restaurant 1st class (no public transport card required for admission)

545 We would like to offer you the beautiful memorial book about these impressive church treasures, illustrated with images of many historical documents, prints and maps: "The Testa Relics - From Constantinople to Amsterdam". Compiled by our esteemed family historian Mehmet Tütüncü. See the cover below.

This book will then be available in bookstores.

550 It is recommended - if coming from outside Amsterdam - to travel to Central Station by train or metro.

Also on behalf of Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam, Mgr. Jan Hendriks and Pastor and Dean of Amsterdam, Eric Fennis, we as Testa descendants would greatly appreciate it if you would honor us with your visit.

Please let us know if you plan to be present and if "accompanied" by whom. RSVP:

555 ptesta0808@gmail.com

Due to the great interest (approx. 300 guests) we request that you bring this invitation as an admission ticket and show it to the inspectors at the entrance. The celebration will be broadcast live on NPO 2 and therefore Pastor Fennis requests that you take your place no later than 09:45 and preferably earlier.

560 With kind regards from us,
André Testa, Patrick Testa, Noepy Beckers-Testa
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ptesta0808@gmail.com
noepy.testa@gmail.com