

In Veronica's writings we find many biblical quotations, at times indirectly, but always precise: She shows familiarity with the sacred text, from which her spiritual experience is nourished. Revealed, moreover, is that the intense moments of Veronica's mystical experience are never separated from the salvific events celebrated in the liturgy, where the proclamation and hearing of the Word of God has a particular place. Hence, sacred Scripture illumines, purifies and confirms Veronica's experience, rendering it ecclesial. On the other hand, however, precisely her experience, anchored in sacred Scripture with an uncommon intensity, guides one to a more profound and "spiritual" reading of the text itself, to enter into the hidden profundity of the text. She not only expresses herself with the words of sacred Scripture, but she also really lives from these words, they become life in her.

For example, our saint often quotes the expression of the Apostle Paul: "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31; cf. diary, I, 714; II, 116.1021; III, 48). In her, the assimilation of this Pauline text, her great trust and profound joy, becomes a *fait accompli* in her very person: "My soul," she wrote, "was connected to the divine will and I was truly established and fixed in the will of God. It seems to me that I could never again be separated from this will of God and turn to myself with these precise words: nothing will be able to separate me from the will of God, not anxieties, or sorrows, or toil, or contempt, or temptations, or creatures, or demons, or darkness, and not even death itself, because, in life and in death, I will everything and in everything, the will of God" (Diary, IV, 272). Thus we have the certainty that death is not the last word, we are fixed in the will of God and so, really, in everlasting life.

In particular, Veronica shows herself to be a courageous witness of the beauty and the power of Divine Love, which draws, pervades and inflames her. It is crucified Love that imprinted itself on her flesh, as in that of St. Francis of Assisi, with the stigmata of Jesus. "My Bride," the crucified Christ whispers to me, "the penances you do for those who are in my disgrace are dear to me...Then, detaching an arm from the cross, he made a sign to me to draw near to his side...and I found myself in the arms of the Crucified. What I experienced at that point I cannot recount: I would have liked to remain always in his most holy side" (ibid., I, 37). This is also an image of her spiritual journey, of her interior life: to be in the embrace of the Crucified and thus to be in Christ's love for others.

Also with the Virgin Mary, Veronica lived a relationship of profound intimacy, attested by the words she heard Our Lady say one day and which she reports in her Diary: "I will make you rest on my breast, you are united with my soul, and from it you were taken as in flight to God" (IV, 901).

St. Veronica Giuliani invites us to make our Christian life grow, our union with the Lord in being for others, abandoning ourselves to his will with complete and total trust, and to union with the Church, Bride of Christ; she invites us to participate in the suffering love of Jesus Crucified for the salvation of all sinners; she invites us to fix our gaze on Paradise, the goal of our earthly journey, where we will live together with so many brothers and sisters the joy of full communion with God; she invites us to nourish ourselves daily from the Word of God to warm our hearts and give direction to our life. The last words of the saint can be considered the synthesis of her passionate mystical experience: "I have found Love, Love has let himself be seen!"

St. Veronica was a mystic not of the Medieval Age; she was also a Capuchin Poor Clare nun. December 27, 2010 was the 350th anniversary of her birth. Citta di Castello, the place where she lived the longest and where she died, as well as Mercatello — her native country— and the Diocese of Urbino, Italy celebrate this event joyfully. + + +

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Saint Veronica Giuliani

Commemoration: July 9



Last Words of St. Veronica:

***"I have found Love, Love has allowed Himself to be seen!
This is the cause of my suffering.
Tell it to everyone, tell it to everyone!"***

Saint Veronica Giuliani

Address of Pope Benedict XVI during the general audience Dec. 15, 2010
in Pope Paul VI Hall

Veronica was born on December 27, 1660, in Mercatello, in the valley of Metauro, to Francesco Giuliani and Benedetta Mancini. She was the last of seven sisters, an additional three of whom embraced the monastic life. She was given the name Ursula. She lost her mother at 7, and her father moved to Piacenza as superintendent of customs of the duchy of Parma. In this city, Ursula felt a growing desire to dedicate her life to Christ. The call was ever more pressing, so much so that at 17 she entered the strict cloister of the monastery of the Capuchin Poor Clares of Citta di Castello, where she would remain the whole of her life.

There she received the name Veronica, which means "true image," and, in fact, she would become a true image of Christ Crucified. A year later she made her solemn religious profession. The journey began for her configuration to Christ through much penance, great suffering and certain mystical experiences linked with the Passion of Jesus: the crowning of thorns, the mystical espousal, the wound in her heart and the stigmata. In 1716, at 56, she became abbess of the monastery and was confirmed in this role until her death, which occurred in 1727, after a most painful agony of 33 days that culminated in a profound joy, so much so that her last words were: "I have found Love, Love has allowed Himself to be seen! This is the cause of my suffering. Tell it to everyone, tell it to everyone!" (Summarium Beatificationis, 115-120).

She left her earthly dwelling on July 9 for her encounter with God. She was 67 years old; 50 of those years she spent in the monastery of Citta di Castello. She was proclaimed a saint on May 26, 1893, by Pope Gregory XVI.

Veronica Giuliani wrote much: letters, autobiographical reports, poems. However, the main source to reconstruct her thought is her "Diary," begun in 1693: a good 22,000 handwritten pages, which cover an expanse of 34 years of cloistered life. The writing flows spontaneously and continuously. There are no cancellations or corrections, punctuation marks or distribution of material in chapters or parts according to a pre-established plan. Veronica did not wish to compose a literary work; instead, she was obliged to put her experiences into writing by Father Girolamo Bastianelli, a religious of the Filippini, in agreement with the diocesan bishop Antonio Euctachi.

St. Veronica has a markedly Christ-centered and spousal spirituality: Hers is the experience of being loved by Christ, the faithful and sincere Spouse, and of wanting to correspond with an ever more involved and impassioned love. She interpreted everything in a key of love, and this infuses in her a profound serenity. Everything is lived in union with Christ, for love of Him, and with the joy of being able to demonstrate to Him all the love of which a creature is capable.

The Christ to whom Veronica is profoundly united is the suffering Christ of the passion, death and resurrection; it is Jesus in the act of offering himself to the Father to save us. From this experience derives also the intense and suffering love for the Church, and the twofold way of prayer and offering. The saint lived from this point of view: She prays, suffers, seeks "holy poverty," as "dispossessed," loss of self (cf. *ibid.*, III, 523). Precisely to be like Christ, who gave his whole self.

In every page of her writings Veronica entrusts someone to the Lord, strengthening her prayers of intercession with the offering of herself in every suffering. Her heart dilated to all "the needs of the Holy Church," living with longing the desire of the salvation of "the whole world" (*ibid.*, III-IV, *passim*).

Veronica cried out: "O sinners...come to Jesus' heart; come to the cleansing of his most precious blood...he awaits you with open arms to embrace you" (*ibid.*, II, 16-17). Animated by an ardent charity, she gave care, understanding and forgiveness to the sisters of the monastery. She offered her prayers and sacrifices for the Pope, her bishop, priests and for all needy persons, including the souls in Purgatory. She summarized her contemplative mission in these words: "We cannot go preaching around the world to convert souls, but we are obliged to pray continually for all those souls who are offending God...particularly with our sufferings, that is with a principle of crucified life" (*ibid.*, IV, 877). Our saint conceived this mission as a "being in the middle" between men and God, between sinners and Christ Crucified.

Veronica profoundly lived participation in the suffering love of Jesus, certain that "to suffer with joy" is the "key of love" (cf. *ibid.*, I, 299.417; III, 330.303.871;IV, 192). She evidences that Jesus suffers for men's sins, but also for the sufferings that His faithful servants had to endure in the course of the centuries, in the time of the Church, precisely because of their solid and coherent faith. She wrote: "The Eternal Father made Him see and feel at that point all the sufferings that His elect would have to endure, His dearest souls, that is, those who would know how to benefit from His Blood and from all His sufferings" (*ibid.*, II, 170). As the Apostle Paul says of himself: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His Body, that is, the Church" (Colossians 1:24).

Veronica even asks Jesus to be crucified with him. "In an instant," she wrote, "I saw issue from his most holy wounds five shining rays; and all came to my face. And I saw these rays become as little flames. In four of them were the nails; and in one of them was the lance, as of gold, all red hot: and it pierced my heart, from one side to the other...and the nails went through the hands and feet. I felt great pain; but, in the very pain I saw myself, I felt myself all transformed in God" (Diary, I, 897)

The saint was convinced she was participating already in the Kingdom of God, but at the same time she invoked all the saints of the Blessed Homeland to come to her aid on the earthly journey of her self-giving, while awaiting eternal blessedness; this was the constant aspiration of her life (cf. *ibid.*, II, 909; V, 246). In regard to preaching of the time, not rarely centered on "saving one's soul" in individual terms, Veronica shows a strong "sense of solidarity," a sense of communion with all brothers and sisters on the way to heaven, and she lives, prays and suffers for all. The earthly, penultimate things, instead, although appreciated in the Franciscan sense as gifts of the Creator, were always relative, altogether subordinate to the "taste" of God and under the sign of a radical poverty. In the communion sanctorum, she clarifies her ecclesial donation, as well as the relationship between the pilgrim Church and the heavenly Church. "All the saints," she wrote, "are up there through the merits and the Passion of Jesus; but they cooperated with all that the Lord did, so that their life was all ordered...regulated by (his) very works" (*ibid.*, III, 203).