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The European Fortune of the Roman Veronica



Part One: The Middle Ages

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In his Paradiso, Dante introduces himself as a pilgrim travelling from afar, who
*«has come to set his gaze on our Veronica, / his ancient craving still not satisfied, /
and who thinks to himself, while it is shown: / 'My Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself, /
was this then how You really looked?»* Par. XXXI 104-108.

These deservedly famous lines are often recalled by scholars who have studied the holy face of Christ from a variety of perspectives. Previously, in the *Vita nuova* (XL 1) Dante had already introduced the “beautiful countenance” left by Christ on the “blessed icon”, which many people travelled to see.

These texts document the fact that the cult of the Veronica was already so well-established in the 1300s that seeing the holy sudarium was one of the main goals of pilgrimage to Rome. It is well known that the tradition of this particular devotion coincides with the pontificate of Innocent III who, in 1208, instituted a procession on the Sunday following the Octave of the Epiphany. On this day, the holy cloth kept in St Peter's was carried in procession from the old basilica to the Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia.

This international conference marks the 800th anniversary of Innocent III's granting of an indulgence linked to devotion to the Veronica, as related in Matthew Paris' *Chronica Maiora*. This gesture coincided with the beginning of the extraordinary fortune of the Veronica all over Europe. The conference focuses on the start of the European fortune of this mysterious relic in the Middle Ages, studied from literary, historical, theological and artistic perspectives.

Further information

www.veronicaconference20162018.com