# Meditations on St. Veronica by Saint John Paul II

Veronica does not appear in the Gospels. Her name is not mentioned, even though the names of other women who accompanied Jesus do appear. It is possible, therefore, that the name refers more to what the woman did. In fact, according to tradition, on the road to Calvary a woman pushed her way through the soldiers escorting Jesus and with a veil wiped the sweat and blood from the Lord’s face. That face remained imprinted on the veil, a faithful reflection, a “true icon”. This would be the reason for the name Veronica. If this is so, the name which evokes the memory of what this woman did carries with it the deepest truth about her.

One day, Jesus drew the criticism of onlookers when he defended a sinful woman who had poured perfumed oil on his feet and dried them with her hair. To those who objected, he replied: “Why do you trouble this woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me . . . In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial” (Mt 26:10, 12). These words could likewise be applied to Veronica. Thus we see the profound eloquence of this event.

The Redeemer of the world presents Veronica with an authentic image of his face. The veil upon which the face of Christ remains imprinted becomes a message for us. In a certain sense it says: This is how every act of goodness, every gesture of true love towards one’s neighbour, strengthens the likeness of the Redeemer of the world in the one who acts that way.

Acts of love do not pass away. Every act of goodness, of understanding, of service leaves on people’s hearts an indelible imprint and makes us ever more like the One who “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (Phil 2:7).   
This is what shapes our identity and gives us our true name.

**Prayer***Lord Jesus Christ,   
you accepted a woman’s selfless gesture of love,   
and in exchange ordained that future generations should remember her   
by the name of your face.   
Grant that our works and the works of all who will come after us   
will make us like unto you and will leave in the world   
the reflection of your infinite love.   
To you, O Jesus, splendour of the Father’s glory,   
be praise and glory for ever. Amen.*

### St. John Paul II

### Colosseum in Rome, April 21, 2000 (Good Friday)

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Tradition has bequeathed us Veronica. Perhaps she is a counterpart to the story of the Cyrenian. As a woman, she could not physically carry the Cross or even be called upon to do so, yet in fact she did carry the Cross with Jesus: she carried it in the only way possible to her at the moment and in obedience to the dictates of her heart: she wiped his Face.

Tradition has it that an imprint of Christ's features remained on the cloth she used. This detail seems fairly easy to explain: since the cloth was covered with blood and sweat, it would preserve traces and outlines.

Yet this detail can have a different meaning if it is considered in the light of Christ's words about the last days. Many will then ask: "Lord, when did we ever do these things for you?". And Jesus will reply: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (cf. Mt 25:37-40). In fact the Saviour leaves his imprint on every single act of charity, as he did on Veronica's cloth.

* Saint John Paul II, 2003

# Meditations by Pope Benedict XVI

From the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. 53:2-3 He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

From the Book of Psalms. 27:8-9 You have said, "Seek my face". My heart says to you, "Your face, Lord, do I seek".

Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Cast me not off, forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

MEDITATION "Your face, Lord, do I seek. Hide not your face from me" (Ps 27:8-9). Veronica ­ Bernice, in the Greek tradition ­ embodies the universal yearning of the devout men and women of the Old Testament, the yearning of all believers to see the face of God. On Jesus' Way of the Cross, though, she at first did nothing more than perform an act of womanly kindness: she held out a facecloth to Jesus. She did not let herself be deterred by the brutality of the soldiers or the fear which gripped the disciples. She is the image of that good woman, who, amid turmoil and dismay, shows the courage born of goodness and does not allow her heart to be bewildered. "Blessed are the pure in heart", the Lord had said in his Sermon on the Mount, "for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8). At first, Veronica saw only a buffeted and pain-filled face. Yet her act of love impressed the true image of Jesus on her heart: on his human face, bloodied and bruised, she saw the face of God and his goodness, which accompanies us even in our deepest sorrows. Only with the heart can we see Jesus. Only love purifies us and gives us the ability to see. Only love enables us to recognize the God who is love itself.

PRAYER: *Lord, grant us restless hearts, hearts which seek your face. Keep us from the blindness of heart which sees only the surface of things. Give us the simplicity and purity which allow us to recognize your presence in the world. When we are not able to accomplish great things, grant us the courage which is born of humility and goodness. Impress your face on our hearts. May we encounter you along the way and show your image to the world.*

- WAY OF THE CROSS AT THE COLOSSEUM GOOD FRIDAY 2005 MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS BY CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER

- See more at: http://www.adoremus.org/Ratzinger\_Stations.html#sthash.vu23AxGV.dpuf

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Along the Way of the Cross popular devotion has depicted a woman’s gesture, steeped in gentleness and veneration, a kind of lingering trace of the perfume of Bethany. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. In that face, marred by suffering, Veronica recognizes the face transfigured by glory; in the features of the suffering Servant she sees the fairest of the sons of men. Seeing Jesus in this way leads to her generous gesture of kindness and in return she receives the imprint of the Holy Face! Veronica teaches us the secret of that feminine gaze that invites encounter and offers help: it *sees persons with the heart*![[1]](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/2011/via_crucis/en/station_06.html" \l "_ftn1" \o ")

Jesus most humble,  
our eyes are incapable of looking *beyond*: *beyond* poverty, to recognize your presence, *beyond* the shadow of sin,   
to glimpse the sun of your mercy, *beyond* the blemishes of the Church,   
to see the face of a Mother.

Come, Spirit of Truth,  
pour into our eyes “the cleansing balm of faith”[[2]](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/2011/via_crucis/en/station_06.html" \l "_ftn2" \o ")  
that they may not be distracted by outward appearances,  
but come to know the allure of things unseen.

* Pope Benedict 16th, 2011
* text of the meditations prepared by Augustinian Sister Maria Rita Piccione, president of the Our Lady of Good Counsel Federation of Augustinian Monasteries in Italy

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*God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ*.

Veronica was one of the women who had followed Jesus, who understood who he was, who loved him; she suffers to see him suffer. Now, standing nearby, she sees his face, that countenance which had so often touched her soul. She sees it distraught, marred and covered with blood, yet ever meek and humble.

He cannot long endure. She wants to relieve his suffering. She takes a cloth and tries to wipe the blood and sweat from that face.

In our lives we have had occasion at times to wipe the tears and sweat of those who suffer. Perhaps we have assisted a terminal patient in the wards of a hospital, or helped an immigrant or someone looking for work, or listened to someone in prison. And in trying to ease their suffering, we may have wiped their face simply by looking upon them with compassion.

And yet, all too seldom do we remember  
that in each of our brothers and sisters in need  
you, the Son of God, are hidden.  
How different would our lives be  
if we would but remember this!  
Little by little we would become aware of the dignity   
of every man, woman and child living on the earth.  
Each person, beautiful or not, gifted or not,   
whether newly conceived in a mother’s womb  
or advanced in age, represents you, Jesus.  
And not only. Each of our brothers and sisters is you.  
Looking upon you, utterly abased on Calvary,  
we will understand with Veronica   
that in every human being we can recognize your face.

* Good Friday led by Benedict XVI, 2012
* Meditations by Danilo and Anna Maria Zanzucchi

# Meditations by Pope Francis

**Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**A woman’s tender love

*“Come”, my heart says, “seek his face!” Your face; Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help (*Ps *27:8-9).*

Jesus drags himself along, gasping. Yet the radiance of his countenance is undiminished. No amount of abuse can dim his beauty. The spittle and the blows were unable to obscure it. His face appears as a burning bush which, the more it is buffeted, the more it radiates salvation. Silent tears fall from the Master’s eyes. He bears the burden of one forsaken. And yet Jesus advances, he does not stop, he does not turn back. He confronts affliction. He is distressed by the cruelty all around him, yet he knows that his dying will not be in vain!

Jesus then halts before a woman who resolutely approaches him. It is Veronica, a true image of a woman’s tender love.

Here the Lord embodies our need for love freely given, for the knowledge that we are loved and kept safe by acts of kindness and concern. Veronica’s gesture is bathed in the precious blood of Jesus; it seems to wipe away the acts of irreverence which he endured in those hours of torture. Veronica is able to touch the gentle Jesus, to feel something of his radiance. Not only to alleviate his pain, but to share in his suffering. In Jesus, she sees all our neighbours who need to be consoled with a tender touch, and comes to hear the cries of pain of all those who, in our own day, receive neither practical assistance nor the warmth of compassion. Who die of loneliness…

PRAYER

*Lord Jesus,  
how burdensome it is, when we are separated from all those   
we thought would stand by us on the day of our desolation!  
Cloak us in that cloth,  
stained by your precious blood  
shed along the path of abandonment,  
which you too unjustly endured.  
Without you, we do not have,  
nor can we give, a modicum of solace. Amen.*

* *Good Friday, led by Pope Francis, April 18, 2014, Rom3*
* *Meditations by H.E. Msgr. Giancarlo Maria Bregantini,*

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A Reading from the Book of Psalms 27:8-9

*Of you my heart has spoken: "Seek his face." It is your face, O Lord, that I seek; hide not your face. Dismiss not your servant in anger; you have been my help. Do not abandon or forsake me, O God my help!*

Veronica sought you in the midst of the crowd. She sought you and finally found you. While your anguish was at its height, she wanted to ease it by wiping your face with a towel. A small gesture, but it expressed all her love for you and all her faith in you; it has remained impressed on the memory of our Christian tradition.

Lord Jesus,   
it is your face that we seek.   
Veronica reminds us that you are present   
in every person who suffers   
and goes forward along his or her path to Golgotha.   
Lord, grant that we may find you in the poor,   
in the least of your brethren,   
in order to wipe away the tears of those who weep,   
to take care of those who suffer   
and to support those who are weak.

Lord, you teach us   
that a wounded and forgotten person   
loses neither worth nor dignity   
and remains a sign   
of your hidden presence in the world.   
Help us to wipe away from his or her face   
the marks of poverty and injustice,   
so that your image in him or her   
may be revealed and may shine forth.

We pray for those who are seeking your Face   
and who find it in those of the homeless,   
the poor and children exposed to violence and exploitation.   
Amen.

* Stations of the Cross, Led by Pope Francis 2013