

to tradition, he is also the soldier who exclaimed: "Indeed this man was the son of God." (Mk. 15:39) Saint Longinus converted and eventually returned to his hometown of Lanciano where he preached the Gospel and won the martyr's crown.

During the middle ages the Holy Lance entered into the popular conscience of Christians, and figures prominently in the Arthurian legends of the Holy Grail. The real holy Lance, however, was venerated in Jerusalem during the early centuries of Christendom. Saint Antonius of Piacenza recounts having seen it there along with the crown of thorns in 570 AD.

As with the crown of thorns, it was later transferred to Constantinople. It seems that at some point the tip of the lance head broke off from the main body of the lance. This tip was latter transferred to Paris during the reign of St. Louis, but disappeared during the French Revolution.

The lance itself fell into the hands of the Turks when they conquered Constantinople in 1453. Happily for Christians, Sultan Bayezid II sent it to Pope Innocent VIII in 1492. The sultan meant it as a bribe, for his brother and rival was, at that time, a prisoner in Rome and Bayezid was not at all anxious to see him freed.

In these circumstances, Innocent VIII and his successors were highly sceptical of the authenticity of this relic until someone in the 18th century proved to Pope Benedict XIV's satisfaction that it was a perfect match to the relic in Paris.

The Nails & Hammer

The nails and a hammer are another set of instruments of the Passion. The true relics of the nails are now impossible to determine as there are over thirty claimants from various shrines across Europe. The Roman basilica of Santa Croce, however, claims that its nail was brought to Rome by St. Helena when she brought a the piece of the True Cross which also rests there.

The nails are intimately connected with the Sacred Wounds of our Lord. Several saints have been granted the privilege of bearing the "stigmata." The case of St. Francis of Assisi is exceptional, however, in that for him the stigmata included some resemblance of nails in the wounds of his hands and feet.

Among the instruments of the Passion, one must not forget the pillar or column to which our Lord was bound when He was scourged along with the whips used for this torture. While the scourges seem to have disappeared, the column was long venerated in Jerusalem before being brought to Rome by Cardinal Colonna in 1223. It can now be found in a magnificent reliquary in the basilica of St. Praxedes.

Christian piety expands on the notion of instruments to include articles related to the Passion even if not an instrument of torture in the strict sense. Thus in images of the Instruments of the Passion one often sees: the ladder which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would have used to take our Lord's body down from the cross; pincers for removing the nails; myrrh and the shroud for embalming our Lord's Body; Veronica's veil; a sun

and moon to represent the darkness at midday; 30 pieces of silver; the purple cloak; the cock; one or sometimes seven sword(s) of sorrow which pierced our Lady's heart; the seamless robe of Christ; the dice with which the soldiers cast lots; and the title-board on which was written "Jesus of Nazareth." This last relic is also conserved in Santa Croce in Rome.

Christ Suffered for Us

During Holy Week and beyond we should remember how much our Lord suffered for our salvation. If we always held before our eyes and in our hearts the image of our Suffering Saviour, we would never sin again. Let us promise Him that His suffering will not be in vain. Let us repent from our evil ways and turn to the Lord our God with our whole heart.

