



ITALY

**RELIQUIAE**

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SPOLETO (UMBRIA), A RELIC RECOVERED FROM THE CHURCH OF SAN MARTINO IN ABETO (PRECI) WHICH IS CURRENTLY PRESERVED IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE UMBRIA REGION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF WORKS OF ART DAMAGED DURING THE RECENT EARTHQUAKES. ITS MANAGER TIZIANA BRIGANTI EXPLAINED, "IN THIS ARCHIVE OF ABOUT 4,000 SQUARE METRES, WE KEEP AND CATALOGUE ALL THE WORKS, IN TOTAL 5,500 FROM A HUNDRED CHURCHES AND MUSEUMS IN THE AREA BETWEEN NORCIA, CASCIA AND PRECI".

WHETHER REAL OR FAKE, RELICS OF SAINTS ARE POWERFUL OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

THE SACRED "GRAND TOUR" OF ITALY IS THE ITINERARY OF CHRISTIAN RELICS THAT EXTENDS FROM ROME THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PENINSULA.

IT TOUCHES PADUA (ST. FRANCIS), PASSING THROUGH GENOA (ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST), DESCENDING TO NAPLES (ST. JANUARIUS) ALL THE WAY DOWN TO CATANIA (ST. AGATHA).

THE RELICS ARE A BUSINESS CARD OF THE FAITH, "TRANSPORTABLE SANCTITY" THAT CAN BE FOUND THROUGHOUT ITALY: IN THE HOMES OF THE FAITHFUL, IN MUSEUMS, IN ANTIQUE SHOPS, UNDER CHURCH ALTARS.

PRAYING TO THE BONES OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYRS KEPT IN THE ROMAN CATACOMBS WAS A WAY TO WORSHIP GOD; OVER TIME, POSSESSING THEM CAME TO MEAN CONQUERING POWER AND POLITICAL PRESTIGE.

THE "PIECES OF SAINTS" BECAME TALISMANS WITH MIRACULOUS POWERS; THEY COULD BE TRANSPORTED EASILY, STOLEN FROM ENEMIES AND JEALOUSLY GUARDED.

THEIR TRADE HAS ALWAYS BEEN FORBIDDEN, BUT THE PROHIBITIONS ARE EASILY CIRCUMVENTED: TODAY THE RELICS CAN ONLY BE DONATED (FROM RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS), BUT THEY ARE OFTEN STOLEN OR FALSIFIED, FEEDING A RICH BLACK MARKET (OFTEN ONLINE) THAT MIXES FRAUD WITH GOOD FAITH.



ROME, THE FOURTH MILE OF VIA APPIA ANTICA, AT THE CIRCULAR MAUSOLEUM OF THE IMPERIAL AGE: FOLLOWING THE "REGINA VIARUM", OR APPIAN WAY, PILGRIMS REACHED THE PORT OF BRINDISI AND FROM THERE PROCEEDED TO THE HOLY LAND, OFTEN RETURNING WITH RELICS.



LUCCA, CHURCH OF SAN MICHELE IN FORO: THE TEAM OF PALEOPATHOLOGISTS LED BY PROFESSOR GINO FORNACIARI AND HIS SON ANTONIO AT WORK ON THE REMAINS OF SAN DAVINO, REMOVED FROM THE CASKET HOLDING IT UNDER THE ALTAR. DAVINO WAS A PILGRIM OF ARMENIAN ORIGIN FROM THE ELEVENTH CENTURY; AFTER HIS PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM AND ROME, HE STOPPED IN LUCCA FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS ON HIS WAY TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, BUT DIED IN THE TUSCAN CITY. HIS BODY RAPIDLY ACQUIRED PRESUMED HEALING POWERS AND HAS SINCE BEEN A SUBJECT OF GREAT DEVOTION.



MONZA, MUSEUM AND TREASURE OF THE CATHEDRAL OF MONZA: THE PRECIOUS IRON CROWN. USED FOR MANY CENTURIES FOR THE PROCLAMATION OF KINGS AND EMPERORS (CHARLEMAGNE, CHARLES V, NAPOLEON), TRADITION HAS IT THAT THE METAL PLATE INSERTED IN THE CROWN IS ONE OF THE NAILS USED FOR THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST.



GENOA, ON 24 JUNE ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST IS CELEBRATED AS PATRON SAINT OF THE CITY AND PROTECTOR OF SAILORS, WITH A PROCESSION OF HIS RELICS TO THE SEA.



ROME, THE CATACOMBS OF SAINT SEBASTIAN. THE FIRST CULTS OF RELICS AROSE HERE IN THE ROMAN CATACOMBS, WHICH FOR MANY YEARS WERE CONSIDERED REAL SANCTUARIES THANKS TO THE PRESENCE OF MARTYRS' RELICS.



BAREGGIO (MILAN), HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENT OF THE EPISODE DURING WHICH ST. MARTIN DONATED PART OF HIS CLOAK TO THE NEEDY. ST. MARTIN'S CLOAK HAS SINCE BEEN PRESERVED AS ONE OF THE MOST PRECIOUS MEDIEVAL RELICS, BECOMING PART OF THE COLLECTION OF MEROVINGIAN AND THEN CAROLINGIAN KINGS. THE HOOD, OR CAPPÀ (HENCE THE TERM CAPPELLA, OR CHAPEL, WHERE IT WAS PRESERVED) FOLLOWED THE KINGS IN BATTLE, AND IN TIMES OF PEACE OATHS WERE MADE TO IT.



TURIN, MUSEUM OF THE HOLY SHROUD; ARTISTIC ELABORATION OF THE BACKLIT SHROUD.



SPOLETO (UMBRIA), THE SCHOLAR ELENA MARCHIONNI IS WORKING ON THE PRESERVED BODY OF ST. CONSTANTINE THE MARTYR, KEPT IN A WOODEN CASE AND BROUGHT HERE FROM THE CHURCH OF SANT'ANDREA DI NORCIA. THE RELIC IS NOW KEPT IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE UMBRIA REGION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF WORKS OF ART DAMAGED DURING THE RECENT EARTHQUAKES. ITS MANAGER TIZIANA BRIGANTI EXPLAINED, "IN THIS ARCHIVE OF ABOUT 4,000 SQUARE METRES, WE KEEP AND CATALOGUE ALL THE WORKS, IN TOTAL 5,500 FROM A HUNDRED CHURCHES AND MUSEUMS IN THE AREA BETWEEN NORCIA, CASCIA AND PRECI".



LORETO (ANCONA), BASILICA OF THE HOLY HOUSE, WHERE AN IMPORTANT RELIC IS PRESERVED: THE REMAINS OF THE PRESUMED HOLY HOUSE OF NAZARETH, WHERE JESUS LIVED.



ROME, THE POSTULATOR-GENERAL FRIAR CARLO CALLONI BRINGS SOME RELICS TO THE CHAPEL OF RELICS INSIDE THE GENERAL CURIA OF THE CAPUCHIN FRIARS MINOR.



ROME, GENERAL HOUSE OF DISCALCED CARMELITES, THE HAIR OF SAINT THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS: THE RELIQUIARIST ANTONINO COTTONE IS PREPARING VARIOUS RELIQUARIES WITH EX CAPILLIS RELICS.



CATANIA, DURING THE FEAST HONOURING SAINT AGATHA IN PIAZZA PARDO: A GROUP OF GIRLS WAVING RED CARNATIONS, THE SYMBOL OF THE SAINT'S MARTYRDOM.



SIENA, BASILICA OF SAN DOMENICO: ST. CATHERINE'S HEAD IS PRESERVED IN A CHAPEL OF THE SAME NAME.



GENOA, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST IS CELEBRATED ON 24 JUNE AS PATRON OF THE CITY AND PROTECTOR OF SAILORS, WITH A PROCESSION OF HIS RELICS TO SEA: HERE CARDINAL ANGELO BAGNASCO IS BLESSING THE SEA AND SAILORS WITH THE SAINT'S RELICS.



ROME, GENERAL HOUSE OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES, THE RELIQUIARIST ANTONINO COTTONE IS PREPARING VARIOUS RELIQUARIES WITH EX CAPILLIS RELICS (WITH HAIR) OF SAINT THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS.



PADUA, THE FAITHFUL PHOTOGRAPH THE PROCESSION WITH THE CHIN OF ST. ANTHONY ON 13 JUNE, THE DAY HE IS HONOURED.



ROME, PROVINCIAL HOUSE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY: REGINA MONDI, THE SHIRT JOHN PAUL II WORE ON 13 MAY 1981 WHEN HE WAS ATTACKED. THE SHIRT WAS PRESERVED BY THE NURSE ANNA STANGHELLINI AND KEPT PRIVATELY UNTIL MARCH 2000, WHEN SHE GAVE IT TO THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY IN ROME.



SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO (FOGGIA), A GROUP OF NUNS IN THE SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE NEW SANCTUARY OF SAINT PIO DA PIETRELCINA.



VENICE, ST. MARK'S CATHEDRAL, TREASURE AND SANCTUARY OF ST. MARK: THE PRESUMED RIGHT HAND OF ST. MARK.



MILAN, ARCHIVE OF THE BASILICA OF SANT'AMBROGIO: FROM LEFT, ARCHAEOLOGIST SABINE SCHRENK, RESTORER ULRIKE REICHERT AND HEAD OF THE SANT'AMBROGIO ARCHIVES MIRIAM TERESA ANALYSE THE RELIC OF SANT'AMBROGIO'S TUNIC DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL PIECES.



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PARALLELOZERO, VIA DONATELLO 19/A MILAN - INFO@PARALLELOZERO.COM - WWW.PARALLELOZERO.COM - +39 02 89281630