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FEBRUARY 2025 ISSUE

EMPTY TOMB PROJECT

T H E M A G A Z I N E

What If You Could See the Face of God?

The Amazing New
Evidence Surrounding
the Shroud of Turin



The Proof of Lourdes



Hope in the Wilderness



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ETP: The Magazine

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What is The Empty Tomb Project?

Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine is a non-profit that exists to bring the reality and power of the empty tomb to as many people as possible. We are convinced that if men and women encounter Jesus as a real living person their lives will be radically changed.

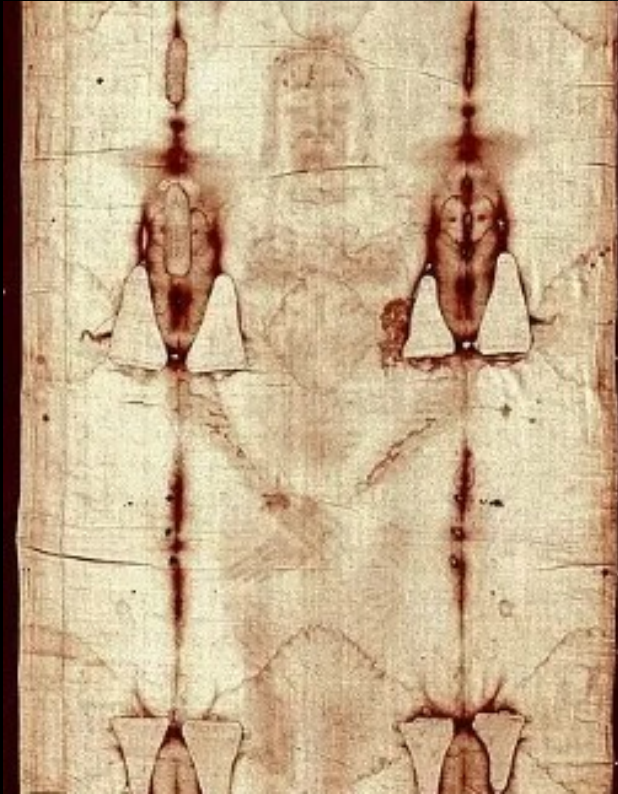
We are an evangelization company that desires to bring relevant cultural and spiritual topics to our readers in an honest and fresh manner. We dive into topics that truly matter to people, themes that are brought up in people's homes as well as in church circles. We desire to bring uniformity in message and an increase in inspiration to Catholics across Long Island (and beyond).

Along with providing the most dynamic content we are committed to producing a product that is beautifully captivating to the eye. To do so we rely on the faithful designers at Startup Catholic so that the content can be amplified by the aesthetics of the magazine.

In order to reach as many people as possible with the critically important message of Christ we rely on donors in order to grow the mission and impact of our magazine. This will allow us to remain free and ensure that anyone who desires to meet Jesus today will have that opportunity. If you feel called to support us, please reach out via email: EmptyTombProject@gmail.com and join us in the mission! All donations are tax deductible.

What If You Could See the Face of God?

By Thomas Griffin



What if you could see the face of Jesus? What would that mean for how you pray? What would that mean for how you live your life? Could you ever go one day again without looking at him?

The Shroud of Turin has been venerated as the burial cloth of Jesus for centuries. Countless pilgrims have made their way to visit the miraculous image on this ancient cloth. Scientists have still not been able to decipher how the image was made on the fabric. There is no pigment on the cloth. There is no detectable ink. The image on the cloth is unexplainable and unrepeatable. The only possible explanation is that some sort of electromagnetic radiation (a burst of intense light) somehow left marks on the cloth.

It cannot be replicated because the theory behind the image would require a miraculous event. Forensic pathologists have noted the following:

“The perfect wounds and blood deposits on the cloth were not disturbed by the removal of the

body. When you dress a wound in a cloth bandage, it sticks hard, and when the bandage is removed, the blood clots break up and traces of flesh can be found on the cloth. There is no evidence that the blood deposits on the Shroud have been disturbed. It appears that the body simply ‘dematerialised’ in a way that did not disturb the blood, at the same time leaving behind an image that could not have been created in the Middle Ages, any more than in the first century.”

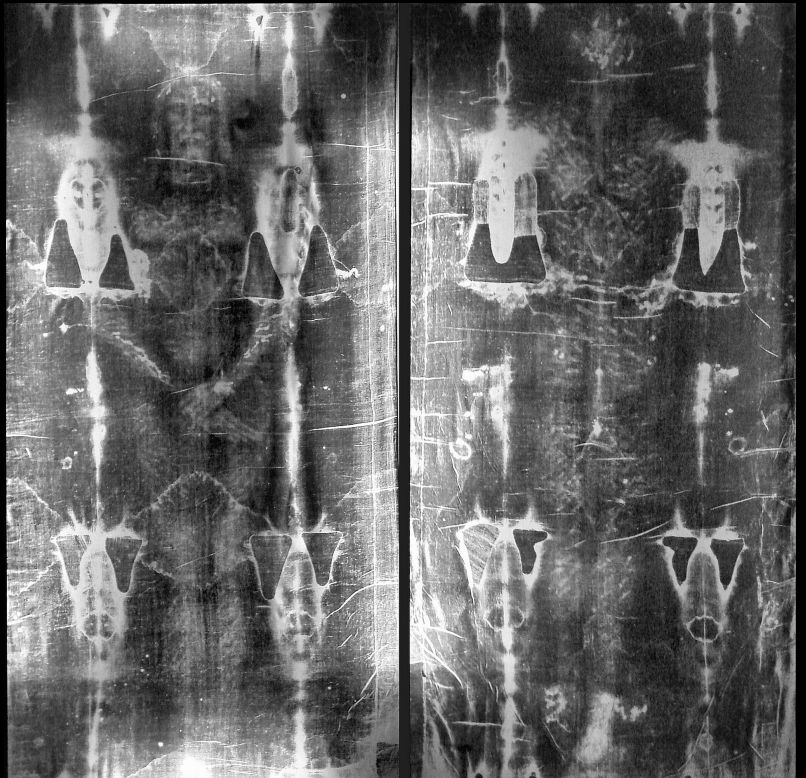
What the image shows is a shadow of a man who was beaten and crucified. There are blood stains throughout the entire 14 feet x 3 1/2 feet cloth. The blood type is from a male (AB+) and the anatomical studies have shown that the image is consistent with the brutal scourging and crucifixion utilized by the Romans.

In 1988, the cloth was scientifically analyzed. It was put through the best known process (at the time) for how we date materials. Through carbon dating the Shroud of Turin was dated to have an origin sometime between 1260 and 1390. Up until this past summer, many began to drop their belief in the shroud as the burial cloth of Christ due to these findings. However, over the summer there was new evidence that emerged that is exceptional.

Wide-Angle X-ray Scattering was used to date the shroud in 2022. This new advanced method “penetrates deep into the material to analyze it at a microscopic level and measure the deterioration of the linen threads.” It is similar to the type of scan someone would receive if they were to fracture a bone and the doctor needed to see the break clearly.

After much research and analysis, this more sophisticated dating technique, found that the cloth is from the 1st century (same time period as Jesus' birth and death). Scientists have discovered that there was contamination in the original test sample that was used for carbon dating. The cloth was left unprotected for centuries. Countless people had touched it, smoke from candles entrenched it for years, and a plethora of other variables led to the carbon dating being inaccurate.

It is interesting that some scientists were always suspicious of the carbon dating from the 1988 study. They struggled to comprehend that the type of image on the cloth could have been produced in the Middle Ages. There have also been countless Catholics who saw the shroud in-person and were convinced of its authenticity. Others simply continued to believe despite the fact that the carbon dating said different. People claimed to be deeply moved by the face of Jesus on the shroud. They used it as a focus in prayer and felt as if they finally could see God's face.



Now, with the new scientific analysis released it appears that we can have firmer trust that this actually is the burial cloth of Christ. The God of the universe who was killed for our sins left us this relic of his death and resurrection so that we could have access to him in a unique way. So, this week, begin your prayer time staring at the face of Jesus. Look at him for a few minutes and then close your eyes and have a conversation with him. It won't be pretend. He will be there with you, looking at you and declaring that you were the reason why he endured the agony of the cross - it was all for love of you.

If you desire to see the face of Jesus, look no further. See him in the shroud.

Thomas Griffin is the chairperson of the Religion Department at a Catholic High School on Long Island where he lives with his wife and three children. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine. He is the author of Let Us Begin: Saint Francis's Way of Becoming Like Christ and Renewing the World.



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Church teaching insists that cremated remains must be given the same respect as the body, including the manner in which they are carried, and the attention given to their appropriate transport and placement. The cremated remains of a body are to be buried or entombed, preferably in a Catholic cemetery, and using the rites provided by the Order of Christian Funerals. The following are not considered to be reverent dispositions that the Church requires: scattering cremated remains, dividing cremated remains and keeping cremated remains in the home.

All too often, families do not immediately select a final resting place for cremated remains. If you are among those who still have your loved one's cremated remains at home, now is the time to ensure a safe, respectful final resting place. At Catholic Cemeteries of Long Island, your loved one will be in a place that reflects their Catholic beliefs and values, a place that reminds us that death is a step to a new and eternal life with the risen Lord.

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He Left the Ninety-Nine For You

By Josephine Pinto



Much like the changing seasons, we too go through periods in our life when our faith feels stronger and more present than at other times. It's a lot easier to worship and feel connected to Jesus during the seasons where we celebrate His birth and resurrection, but when the weather begins to change and we settle into the quiet of our minds and the mundane schedules of life, our faith can sometimes get put on the back burner.

When this happens and we don't hear the voice of God as loudly in our minds or feel Him as strongly in our hearts, we can often fall into a

downward spiral where we believe He's not there. And that spiral can lead to habits and sinful behavior where we feel there's no coming back. We've stumbled so far; surely He won't forgive or want us back (we convince ourselves).

In Luke 15, Jesus gives the parable of the lost sheep. The crowd gathered around Him was full of tax collectors and sinners. When the Pharisees saw this, they were outraged, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). This was the prime opportunity for Jesus to teach them one of his most important lessons. Jesus always knows his audience perfectly and uses scenarios that they can relate to and understand. So, Christ asks them, "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy," (Luke 15:4-5).

Jesus teaches us this unchanging truth: that it does not matter how far we wander, he is our Shepherd and will always seek to bring us back to himself. Regardless of what we've done or have failed to do. He then goes on to say, "I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need for repentance," (Luke 15:7).

Jesus came to call the sinners, and the good news is, that's all of us. He came to save each and every one of us. So when we go through those periods where we feel so disconnected from Him and unworthy of reaching back to Him, it's important to remember this parable. We are all the lost sheep at some point or another, and Christ longs for us to come back with a heart of true repentance.

In a similar way, when we travel through the quiet seasons, it's important to know that just



because we don't always feel God's presence, it doesn't mean He's not there. He's always with us, walking before us, and guiding our way. No matter the struggles of sin or the fogginess of belief, we are called to trust in His never failing presence. The answer isn't to hide our faces in shame but to bring our faults and flaws to the feet of the Father, ask for His forgiveness, and know He will always welcome us back with open arms.

It's important to take this knowledge into account when we see others falling off the path or stuck in patterns of sin and suffering. For Jesus says, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

What a powerful verse. And the more we think about it, the more we begin to look at everyone we meet or pass by with a different lens. We are all in need of saving, and just as we fall and stumble, it's important that we help our brothers and sisters when they do too. A kind word or warm smile can go a long way because the people we sometimes overlook are the very ones Jesus would sit down beside.

So as we go through this next season, let's keep these powerful words and lessons of our Savior in the front of our minds, and remember that there is nothing lost that can't be found.

Josephine Pinto was born and raised in a devout Catholic household in Brooklyn, NY. She received her MA in Creative Writing in Edinburgh, Scotland where she is still currently residing, traveling around the country and learning more about her faith.



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Hope in the Wilderness

By Mary Molloy

The stretch from late January through February often feels like the longest winter of the soul. Here in the Northeast, each day brings with it a particular challenge: steel-gray skies, biting cold, and darkness that seems to arrive too early and stay too late. The warm glow of Christmas has faded—its magical lights and decorations carefully packed away—leaving only the harsh glare of streetlights and the unspectacular weight of ordinary tasks and activities.

It's during this season that our "new year, new me" resolutions begin to waver. The fresh promise of the beginning of January dissolves into the reality of Ordinary Time, leaving us to wrestle with a critical choice: persevere through sacrifice and faith, or simply wait until Lenten spring time for another fresh start.

During these challenging days, I find profound comfort in the story from 1 Kings, where the Prophet Elijah encounters his own wilderness moment. Despite just witnessing God's power in an extraordinary miracle on Mount Carmel—where fire from heaven proved him a true prophet of Yahweh—Elijah finds himself not celebrated, but condemned. Forced to flee for his life, he faces a harsh truth we all eventually confront: sometimes our greatest victories are followed by our deepest valleys.

How often do we, like Elijah, believe that if we just complete steps A, B, and C, life will finally smooth out? Yet reality teaches us that life is not a single battle won, but a continuous journey of faith. When Elijah reached his breaking point and prayed for death, God's response wasn't a dramatic solution, but something beautifully simple: bread from heaven, water, and an invitation to rest.

The angel's words to Elijah resonate deeply: "Eat and rest, or the journey will be too much for you." This divine counsel wasn't offered once, but twice—a reminder that sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is simply take care of our basic needs. Only after this period of nourishment and rest could Elijah continue his mission through the wilderness.

This story serves as a powerful reminder of our fundamental dependence on God. Even our most carefully crafted resolutions and well-laid plans aren't enough to sustain us through life's wilderness seasons. Like the Israelites receiving manna in the desert, we too are called to receive our daily portion of grace—the Bread of Life—and find rest in our Father's love.

We often expect God to reveal Himself in dramatic displays of power, like Elijah's fire on Mount Carmel. Yet our humble God often chooses to manifest His presence in the ordinary moments of our lives: in the quiet of a weekday Mass, in the drowsy prayers of a tired soul, in the simple act of being present to Him when all other words fail.



The daily bread of life often goes without notice. When I go to Mass and there are only a handful of people on a peaceful Thursday morning and all the congregation has sleepy eyes—Christ is truly present giving us deep rest. When I go to prayer after an exhausting day of work and all I have in me is the ability to just be present to God and gaze at the Tabernacle or a religious image, God is present and giving me sustenance. When I am attentive to my daily obligations and am mindful of God’s presence, He is feeding me and sustaining me.

As we journey through these winter days, let us learn from the Prophet Elijah that even when times feel dark and cold and our motivations and resilience seem to have failed us, that God is ever present to sustain us and give us rest. In the Gospels, Jesus always calls the sick, the lame and the weary to come to Him and He will give them rest. In the lives of the Saints, they often failed, were discouraged and struggled with a variety of trials- but the glory of their stories is that God was with them. Indeed, God is with us and He will always sustain us and give us rest, till we finally make it through the Wilderness of Life to the face to face rest of Heaven’s gaze.

Mary Molloy teaches Religion at a Catholic high school on Long Island. She received her BA & MA in Catechetics and Theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville. She has spent the last 15 years in ministry both internationally and domestically. Her favorite thing is to serve the poor and spend quality time with her loved ones.

New Book on the Life and Power of St. Francis

Let Us Begin

Saint Francis's Way of Becoming
Like Christ and Renewing
the World

Thomas Griffin

Foreword by Fr. Mark-Mary Ames, CFR

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BOOK DESCRIPTION

Our culture is broken. The remedy is not a program or a worldwide initiative. The answer is found in personal renewal.

The Proof of Lourdes

By Aidan Weber

The University of Notre Dame houses majestic sites such as the Golden Dome, the 80,000-seat Notre Dame Stadium, the aptly nicknamed “Touchdown Jesus” mural, and the ornate Basilica of the Sacred Heart. However, in troubling times students head to the depths of campus. There lies the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. At the Grotto fellow students and I experience a closeness that attracts us to the site. Even those who have distanced themselves from the faith find themselves at the grotto during a late-night stroll. The peace, quiet, and closeness to the divine elevate the entire scene.

The Grotto is a one-seventh replica of the original grotto in Lourdes, France where Mary appeared to 14-year-old St. Bernadette Soubirous 18 times over six months in 1858. Mary’s first appearance occurred on February 11th, and 32 years later Pope Leo XIII declared that date the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. In accord with Mary’s plea in one of her appearances a stunning basilica now stands at the site of the apparition, and the Grotto has become one of the most popular Catholic pilgrimages. Bernadette responded to this apparition by becoming a nun, and finding joy in her suffering which consisted of cholera, asthma, aneurysms, bone decay, partial deafness, and tuberculosis because Mary promised her “Not happiness in this world, but in the next.” The apparition confirms our faith as Catholics and demonstrates Mary and Christ’s desire to be with us.

The Church Fathers regard miracles as further proof of what Catholics hold to be true by faith. God, in His infinite love, confirms what we believe by appealing to our senses. Miracles are in no way a substitute for faith, but they confirm what has been revealed by God in Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Mary’s appearance to St. Bernadette confirms what Scripture and Tradition have revealed: Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ who sacrificed himself out of love for us so that we can live with God eternally in Heaven. If all these things weren’t true Mary wouldn’t have been able to appear to St. Bernadette.

Furthermore, there have been 7,000 reported healings at the Grotto in Lourdes by pilgrims. The Church has fully accepted 70 of these as miraculous. The Catholic Church investigates these claims with their Office of Medical Observations in France, which uses seven criteria to confirm if these healings could be miraculous, including there being no possible medical explanation. A panel of 33 international doctors explores the claims, calls for copious tests, and produces its findings to be peer-reviewed by anyone. The latest miracle in 2013 took 8 years to confirm, and the case was independently reviewed by 300 different doctors who could find no medical explanation for the sudden healing of Sister Bernadette Moriau who had been left wheelchair-bound since 1980. The head of the Office of Medical Observations, Dr. Alessandro de Franciscis, encourages all doctors to review the case because there is no medical explanation.

A common question I receive as a college student trying to live his faith is: why God doesn't just perform a miracle for someone to prove His existence. Why can't he just make me levitate for a second to prove His existence? I proposed this question to my theology professor one day, and He responded by saying, "You mean why didn't He send Mary to Lourdes or Fatima to appear to us?" He of course did, and my professor went on to list other miracles, and it begged the question: how many times must God do this for it to be enough for us? My faith life was radically changed when I considered how I'd respond if Mary appeared to me. In my mind, I said obviously my life would be transformed, but I had to consider: do I not believe? Do I not already believe what she revealed at Lourdes? Why must she appear to me, and why have I not already made those radical changes I said I would if she did appear to me?

The truth is Christ appears to us every day. He appears in the sacraments and prayer because He is not done with us. He wants a personal relationship with us all. He constantly works through the Church and by the love we have for one another because God is love. Sometimes in our fallen nature we need more tangible experiences like an apparition in Lourdes, which He grants us. However, let the Lord give you the strength to see daily apparitions of Him. More importantly, respond to them like St. Bernadette. Consider how your life would change if you were in St. Bernadette's position? Then live accordingly.

Aidan Weber is a Long Island resident who is currently studying theology at the University of Notre Dame.



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