



**The
Miraculous Crucifix
of the
Sanctuary of Valcalda
in
Pieve Di Cadore
Officiated by the Barefoot Camelites**

Translated by:

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The Finding of the Crucifix

At the foot of the gracious, small town of Pieve, which is the district capital of the Cadore Comunita, is the small and charming hamlet of Valcalda, known in all of Cadore for the antique Sanctuary of the Crucifix, from which it takes its name.

Tradition says the contadini (country people) of Valcalda were plowing the countryside. All of a sudden the oxen stopped and then more surprisingly bent their knees. This strange behavior and the inability of the driver to make them get up, the workers decided to dig at the spot where the oxen would no longer proceed.

To their surprise what they uncovered was even brighter! After digging for a short period of time they uncovered a large wooden box, and inside was the crucifix that today is revered in the Sanctuary. The joy of the good people was muted in the veneration of the blessed Effigy. Quickly the crucifix was transported to the church in Pieve and from there a procession took it to the small church, now the Sanctuary, dedicated to Saint Antonio where it was placed over the altar.

Period of the Find

No one is certain of when the crucifix was found. Everyone believes the year to be around 1540, in the month of either April or May.

But how was it the crucifix came to be buried in this land?

The most reliable explanation is that in 778 a company of French soldiers was being pursued by the Hungarians, a people at that time considered to be idol worshipers. To save the crucifix from an attack the French soldiers took it with them, later burying it.

It would not have been unusual for a company of soldiers to be carrying a crucifix. They were soldiers of Carlo Magno (Charles the Great), a commander committed to the faith. In Saxony he ordered the idols to be demolished and substituted the crucifix. He and his troops marched against the iconoclasts of the east raising, at the head of his army, the Holy Crucifix.¹

Although nothing descriptive has been handed down from the elders; it is thought the actual records have, over the centuries, disappeared in the ruins and the fires when Cadore was overrun with barbarians.

The Crucifix in the Sanctuary

Soon after the crucifix was placed over the altar of Saint Antonio it became an object of veneration by the faithful.

The reputation of the treasure spread throughout the region, and gave rise to devotions. In 1630, during the period when the sadly, famous pestilence was raging throughout Italy and brought to the Republic of Venice, people who were threatened by the plague gathered as a crowd, at the feet of Christ, begging for the salvation, of their land, from this curse.

Then a miracle happened. The crucifix let fall from the forehead drops of blood, in the presence of the faithful. With guidance from the priest the faithful collected those precious drops. The drops were gathered, with linens, and then placed into a reliquary. The plague stopped and they escaped the tragedy. Evidently, the Christ demonstrated a sign of predilection and of fulfillment. Then three devotees avowed to see a star shining from the lips of the Crucified, which then radiated inside the blessed cross.

¹ Krantis: Hist.Sax. book 2- History France, vol. II page 68

The faithful were excited. Pilgrims began to come from far away villages.

In 1669 the main altar was recreated and the Sacred Effigy was enclosed in a protective, glass, niche. A year later it was placed above the altar where it remains today and is venerated.

The small church, now enlarged, took on the name Santuario del Crocifisso di Valcalda (Sanctuary of the Crucifix of Valcalda).

The Crucifix

The Crucifix is the treasure of our Sanctuary. We have no knowledge of the artist who created it, but the exquisite workmanship indicates it was the hands of a master who created the work.

It has a natural grace. Its face has a very painful expression and one cannot stare at it without feeling touched. The half-closed eyes seem to be full of tears and the half closed lips permit one to see the teeth and the tongue. The nose is sharp and covered with drops of blood, which are falling from the forehead. The thick, chestnut, colored hair is divided on the head and ruffled in a part on the top and falls to the front across the face. The head is tilted, one might say too much, but this may be one more characteristic of the Crucifix that moves one to pity. The crown of thorns is removable. A set of rosary beads falls from the chest, visually representing the blood and the water, and extends as far as the knees. The wood of the cross is round and the cross beam is supported by two branches, which like arms, perpendicularly reach out from the wood. The upper section is missing. The Crucifix is made, according to the opinion of many people, who maintain the shape of the Cross of Christ was like the Greek letter tau (T).

All together it combines impressions of things original and new. One finds a spirituality in front of such an image, and a profound sense of compunction and compassion. You have the impression that makes you think of the crucifix of Velasquez or of Vandyke and, even more, that of Limpias. When you see the numerous wounds you remember the pain of Christ in the painting by S. Alfonzo. Only our cross combines all of these aspects.

The Sanctuary

The sanctuary in itself is not a grand artistic structure. Although it is small, it is not lacking interest or value. The variety of styles, if we only speak of style, is an imperfect intonation of parts and some of the lines are less than architectural, given the fact the building has undergone a good deal of restoration in different periods.

The small, primitive, country church dates back to the first half of the sixteenth century, if not before. The major altar as was stated before was rebuilt after the middle of the following century. And within is preserved, in particular, all the fine woodwork and the well proportioned lines and arches, many of which are gilded.

The church is complete with two altars on each side side of the church, one dedicated to San Antonio Abate and the other, on the right, to San Carlo Borromeo. These altars are carved in wood, which goes well with the main altar, although they appear less antique.

The structure of the building indicates an addition to the posterior part of the temple, which is proportionate to that of the pronao², which assumes more of a classic style, while the

² Pronaos - porch with columns typical of ancient Greek temples

old part of the sanctuary has a gothic configuration inside. The facade gives one the impression of an ancient tetrastyle³, which reveals four columns on the order of a Doric pronao.

On the facade of the gable is a fresco depicting the miracle of the story of the crucifix. It is a shame that the plaster has been, in part, peeled off which has caused damage to the fresco.

During World War I the Germans took away the beautiful copper cupola of the bell tower.

Miracles and Thanks

Today, consulting the inventory of 1697, we are not able to account for the disappearance of many objects, from crutches to paintings, once conserved in the Sanctuary and enumerated in the inventory. These items were eloquent testimonials of thanks given to the Crucifix of Valcalda.

Many are narratives but are attested to by a trustworthy writer, who took care to convey precise dates with the first and last names of the grateful. Omitted were the names of the thirty-eight babies, born dead and brought to the feet of the Crucifix to regain life. And notable is the fact that this Crucifix has extended its protection, in a special way, to dead babies. More than once this blessed God gave life from the gallows of death.

But we cannot leave out several episodes of thanks that were handed down as miracles from the old chronicles. The following selections are those which are most important.

Giovanni M. De Filippo of Auronzo fell from his cart, under which he was found. The wheels ran over his body. He fervidly appealed to the Blessed Crucifix and while the heavy cart was being cut in two, he rose safe and sound. He demonstrated his thanks by a presentation of a small table to the inner wall of the Sanctuary.

Two stonemasons were working on the construction of a house in Pieve. While on a scaffold they discovered that the frame of a sidewall was beginning to give way. Both sensing the danger, they turned to the Miraculous Crucifix of Valcalda. One of them, Giacobbi Egidio felt a mysterious force that pushed him to the opposite side of the falling wall while the other worker fell to the ground. They were both unharmed.

Apollonia Sanpietro one day misplaced a replica of the Cross of our Crucifix. The next day she noticed the loss, later she found it in perfect condition, in the middle of the embers, of the fireplace.

Francesco Glotnich of Auronzo, a miner, while working in a mine was completely buried under a layer of earth that crushed another worker. Unable to move and having no way to leave, because every opening had been blocked by the landslide, he turned to the Crucifix. The earth around him was lifted so he was able to breath until his companions rescued him. They then took him to thank the miraculous Christ.

In 1760 Cadore was desolated by a drought. The people thought to hold a procession with the prodigious Crucifix. As the people stood at the niche studying what to do a cloud

³ Tetrastyle - a portico of four columns which forms the main front of a temple

formed from the sky and there was a short burst of pouring rain. The devoted remained and gave thanks to the wonderful Crucifix.

Giovanni Monaco, farmer for the monastery of San Giustina di Serravalle, had a daughter who was chilled from head to toe. No remedy no matter how expensive was helpful. He made a vow to make a pilgrimage to the Christ at Valcalda, soon afterwards the child recuperated and she herself came to the Sanctuary to fulfill the vow.

Caterina, wife of Giuseppe D'Este, from Conegliano, had a son who frequently took to falling. She led him to the Crucifix of Valcalda, where she prayed fervidly for her son. Then she saw the head of Jesus bend and she heard a voice say: "Go in peace, woman, because that for which you have asked has been granted." This act was also attested to by another person who was present. The fact was proven, the son suffered fewer episodes of this malady than he had previously.

The wife of Giacomo De Lorenzo, from Vinigo, was overwhelmed with grief from the pain of childbirth, so much so that it threatened her life. The husband made a vow to celebrate two holy masses at the altar of the crucifix. Soon afterwards the wife joyously gave birth to a child.

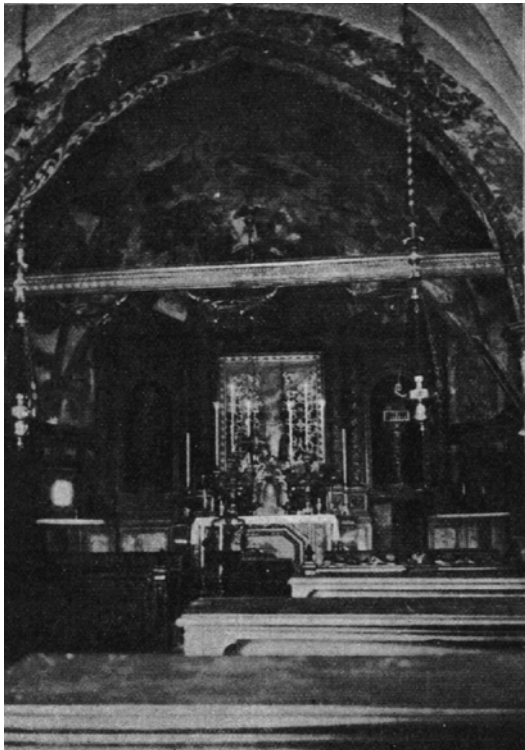
The New Caretaker of the Sanctuary

The new caretakers of the sanctuary are the barefoot Carmelite priests of the Veneta Province, who on Pentecost Sunday (May 19) of the year 1929 with pure enthusiasm from the authorities and the population of Pieve, would take official possession establishing in the adjacent house, the ownership for the local congregation of Carita, the Archdeacon of Pieve being the Reverend Monsignor Cav. Luigi Berardi, and the Provincial of the Barefoot Carmelites, M.R.P. Vincenzo di San Paolino (Belli) of San Vito di Cadore.

And now God blessed the work that the children of Saint Teresa of Jesus set about to complete, trusting that there would be a rebirth of the ancient devotion of the Crucifix of Valcalda among these Cadorine valleys and a flourishing of Christian life.



The church of the Christ with the belltower. The cupola was sacked by the Austrians.



The altar of Christ in the church.



The Crucifix of Valcalda over the altar.

Prayer recited every Friday in the Sanctuary of the Crucifix of Valcalda

Eterno Padre io vi offro i meriti del Sangue preziosissimo di Gesu vostro diletto Figlio, e mio Redentore Divino per la propagazione ed esaltazione della mia cara madre la S. Chiesa, per la consevazione e prosperita del di Lei Capo visibile il Sommo Pontefice Romano, per i Cardinali Vescovi e pastori di anime e per tutti i ministri del Santurio

Gloria... Sia sempre benedetto e ringraziato Gesu che col suo Sangue ci ha salvato.

Eterno Padre, io vi offer i meriti del Sangue preziosissimo di Gesu vostro diletto Figlio e mio Redentore Divino per la pace e la Concordia dei Re e dei principi cattolici, per l'umiliazione dei nemici della S. Fede, e per la felicità del popolo cristiano.

Gloria... Sia sempre...

Eterno Padre io vi offro i meriti del Sangue preziosissimo di Gesu vostro diletto Figlio e mio Redentore Divino, per illuminazione degli'increduli, per l'estirpazione di tutte le eresie, e per la conversione dei peccatori.

Gloria... Sia sempre...

Eterno Padre io vi offro i meriti del Sangue preziosissimo di Gesu vostro diletto Figlio e mio Redentore Divino, per tutti i miei parenti, amici, nemici, per gl'indigenti, infermi e tribolati e per tutti quelli per cui debbo pregare e volete che io preghi.

Gloria... Sia sempre...

Eterno Padre io vi offro i meriti del Sangue preziosissimo di Gesu vostro diletto Figlio e mio Redentore Divino, per tutti quelli che in quest'oggi passeranno all'altra vita, accio li liberiate dale pene dell'inferno, e li ammettiate colla maggior sollecitudine al possesso della gloria Vostra

Gloria... Sia sempre...

Eterno Padre io vi offro i meriti del Sangue preziosissimo di Gesu vostro diletto Figlio e mio Redentore Divino, per tutti quelli che sono amanti di si gran tesoro: per quelli che sono umili con me, nell'adorare e onorare il medesimo; e per quelli infine che travagliano nel propagare la di lui divozione.

Gloria... Sia sempre...

Eterno Padre io vi offro i meriti del Sangue preziosissimo di Gesu vostro diletto Figlio e mio Redentore Divino, per tutti dei miei bisogni spirituali e temporali, in suffragio delle anime sante piu devote del prezzo della nostra Redenzione, e dei dolori e delle pene della nostra cara Madre, Maria.

Gloria... Sia sempre...

Eternal Father I offer you the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus your beloved Son, and my Divine Redeemer for the propagation and exaltation of my dear mother the Church, for the preservation and prosperity of your visible leader the Pope, for the Cardinals, the Bishops and the shepherd of souls and for all the ministers of the Sanctuary.

Glory be... You are always blessed and thanked Jesus through your blood I have been saved.

Eternal Father I offer you the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus your beloved Son, and my Divine Redeemer, for the peace and the good will of the King and the Catholic Princes, for the humbling of the enemies of the Holy Faith, and for the happiness of the Christian people.

Glory be... You are always blessed and thanked...

Eternal Father I offer you the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus your beloved Son, and my Divine Redeemer, for the enlightenment of the non-believers, for the eradication of all heresy, and the protection of the sinners.

Glory be... You are always blessed and thanked...

Eternal Father I offer you the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus your beloved Son, and my Divine Redeemer, for all of my relatives, friends, enemies, for the indigent, the infirmed and tormented and for all those for which I should pray and for whom you want me to pray.

Glory be... You are always blessed and thanked...

Eternal Father I offer you the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus your beloved Son, and my Divine Redeemer, for all those that in this day pass through life, free from the punishments of hell, and admitted with the major quickness to be in the possession of your glory.

Glory be... You are always blessed and thanked...

Eternal Father I offer you the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus your beloved Son, and my Divine Redeemer, for all those who are loved by your great treasure: for those who are humble with me, to worship and to honor the same; and for those in the end that are tormented in he spread from your devotion.

Glory be... You are always blessed and thanked...

Eternal Father I offer you the merits of the precious Blood of Jesus your beloved Son, and my Divine Redeemer, for all of my needs spiritual and temporal, in suffrage of the blessed spirit more devoted of the price of our Redeemer, and of the pain and punishment of our dear mother Mary.

Glory be... You are always blessed and thanked...

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Web site for Comune di Pieve di Cadore containing information about the Church of Val Calda:
<http://www.pievedicadore.org/chiese.htm>