

THE LIFE OF  
CHRIST  
REVEALED



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*The Visions of Blessed Veronica of Milan*

*Translated by Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB*

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“Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they shall see God.”

—Matthew 5:8



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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Blessed Veronica of Milan was a nun, mystic, and visionary of the late Middle Ages. In her relatively short life, her virtue, sanctity, and divine love inspired and touched all those whom she encountered. She was born in 1445 to a poor but devoutly Catholic peasant family in the village of Binasco,<sup>1</sup> close to Milan.

From an early age, she felt a vocation to a life of prayer and service of the Lord, and so for a long time earnestly sought admission to the Augustinian Convent of Saint Martha in Milan to be a nun. But the Mother-Superior of the convent noted that Veronica was almost illiterate and urged her to learn reading and writing before applying again. So, the devout maiden prayed to Christ and to the Blessed Virgin, pleading that they should assist her in learning letters. As her prayer concluded, suddenly Mary appeared to her in a splendid vision. She told Veronica that she would teach her literacy, but there were only

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<sup>1</sup> Because of this, Veronica is sometimes referred to as “Blessed Veronica of Binasco.”

three letters she needed to know. There appeared then to Veronica three letters—one white, one black, and one red. The Mother of God then told her what these letters meant. The white letter signified purity of heart, the black letter signified thinking ill of others and judging them for their faults, and the red letter signified daily meditation on the passion of Christ.

The Queen of Heaven said, “If you remember just these three letters, my daughter, you will know all you need to be pleasing to my Son! For whoever maintains purity of heart shines before Him radiantly. But whoever thinks ill of others and judges and condemns them for their failings becomes black and foul in the sight of God. And, finally, whoever meditates daily on the passion of Christ will be inflamed with the fire of divine love and will glow like a brilliant and beautiful flame in His sight.”

Veronica then decided to enroll in the convent as a lay sister. Lay sisters were a class of nuns who were generally illiterate and of humble birth. They were not bound to the full liturgical observance of the Divine Office, since that required the ability to read Latin fairly fluently. They would typically be assigned the more lowly domestic duties within the convent, acting almost as servants to the fully professed sisters. Veronica accepted this vocation with genuine commitment and joy.

Devoting herself very intensely to prayer and contemplation, she soon began to experience a remarkable series of visions concerning the life of Christ. Although she did not reveal the full contents of all her visions, she shared many of them with one of

her fellow nuns, a certain Sister Thadea. Sister Thadea, in turn, related them to Fr. Isidor Isolanus, of the Order of Preachers, who wrote a life of Blessed Veronica in 1518. It is this biography of Blessed Veronica (reproduced in the *Acta Sanctorum* for January 13), which is the source text for the translation offered in this book, *The Visions of Blessed Veronica of Milan*.

Blessed Veronica, though deeply humble, steadily acquired a reputation for charity, sanctity, and wisdom during her lifetime; and the power of the Lord manifested itself in many miracles worked through her prayers and intercessions. After her death in 1497, she immediately began to be venerated as a saint by her own convent and by the local population. This local veneration was formally confirmed and approved by Pope Leo X in 1517. In 1672, the veneration of Veronica of Milan as one of the beatified was extended to the entire Catholic Church by Pope Clement X.

Blessed Veronica's visions faithfully reflect the accounts of the life of Our Lord found in the Gospels. Yet, in many cases, they add beautiful and touching details of color, imagery, and emotion. These details fill out many of the basic Gospel narratives, and they often harmonize the accounts of the different Evangelists. In many ways, they may be compared with the visions of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, although they precede them by some 350 years.

Within these pages, readers will encounter a multitude of striking and fascinating descriptions, including details of the

arduous journey of the Holy Family to Egypt, and their encounters with gangs of bandits along the way; a description of the food, costumes, and even dancing at the wedding feast at Cana; and many of the private thoughts and feelings of both Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The passion of Christ, in particular, is described in a most heartrending and poignant manner.

It is the sincere hope of the translator that these visions, offered here in English translation for the first time, will renew for many readers the wonder of the Gospel narrative (“the greatest story ever told”) in a beautiful and memorable manner, and that it may stir up the same fire of divine love, contemplation, and devotion that burned so ardently in the heart of Blessed Veronica.

*Beata Veronica, ora pro nobis!*

Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB  
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## THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

On the solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord,<sup>2</sup> Blessed Veronica was contemplating quietly in her cell when her spirit was led forth by an angel into the heavens. There she beheld all the indescribable beauty and power of the celestial court. Then the angel who had led her there spoke to Veronica, saying: “Look! There is the archangel Gabriel, the herald of God, who, for the sake of the salvation of the human race, announced on this day the Incarnation of Christ to the most Blessed Virgin.

“It was that glorious angel, Gabriel, who entered into her chamber, aglow with brilliant splendor. There he found the Virgin reading the Scriptures, and he greeted her, saying: ‘Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.’ When Mary heard this, she was astonished and pondered on the meaning of this salutation. But the angel said to

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<sup>2</sup> March 25.

her: ‘Fear not, Mary, for you have found grace with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call Him Jesus. And He will be great and called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of his ancestor David, and His Kingdom will have no end! You are also to be acclaimed as the greatest of all women, for you shall be granted the titles and honors of the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of God!’

“Then Mary spoke to the angel, saying: ‘But how can this come to be, since I have not known a man?’ And the angel responded, saying those words which are recorded in the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> Then Mary exclaimed: ‘Behold, the handmaid of the Lord! Be it done unto me according to your word.’ And then she conceived the true Son of God, of the Holy Spirit. After a few days, Mary arose and went forth into the mountains.

“And know this,” continued the angel to Veronica, “that Gabriel revealed to the Blessed Virgin all the future mysteries of her Son before He was born, including His passion, His joys, and His whole manner of life.”

After this vision, Blessed Veronica returned to her normal senses. Later, while attending the sacred solemnity of the Mass, she reverently received the most Holy Body of Christ.

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<sup>3</sup> See Lk 1:35: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be holy; He will be called the Son of God.”

## THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Two days before the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord,<sup>4</sup> Blessed Veronica was resting on her bed at night when she found her soul taken up to the starry realms of heaven. There she saw the splendor of the celestial Jerusalem, adorned with unimaginable radiance and indescribable beauty. This heavenly city was of such immense magnitude that it seemed to be a thousand times larger than the entire earth, and it was filled with countless blessed souls and angels. Such was the beauty and majesty of the place that Veronica was unable to find any earthly words which could serve to describe it.

She could sense that the angels were all eager to express to her their superlative joy, just as human beings long to share their happiness with others. And she saw the portals of this celestial city, resplendent with gold of transcendent and blazing luster. But just at this point, Veronica was returned to her normal senses.

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<sup>4</sup> December 23.

Then, on the night of Christmas Eve, Veronica was again taken up into a spiritual ecstasy. She beheld, this time, the Blessed Virgin Mary, evidently soon to deliver her Child, and seated upon a donkey. The Blessed Virgin appeared to be of tender years and of small stature, and therefore little more than a girl. Saint Joseph was present also, as was a maidservant, and a manservant who was leading an ox, bearing provisions for their journey.

Next, Veronica saw Mary (who was heavily pregnant) and Saint Joseph standing together, having their names recorded for the census. She noted that they signed themselves as a man and wife to the official. Their servants were absent at that point. The vision then ended, and Veronica returned to her usual consciousness.

In the morning, the Mother Abbess of the convent then summoned Veronica and sent her forth with another sister to beg for alms in the city of Milan, to help support the sisters.<sup>5</sup> On the evening of that same day (which was Christmas), Veronica again devoted herself to intense prayer. Without delay, her vision was resumed.

She saw once more the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph in Bethlehem, where she had seen them previously. They were wandering the streets, earnestly seeking for a place where they could be accommodated for the night. But, despite making many inquiries, they found nothing available to them at all.

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<sup>5</sup> This seems to reflect the extreme poverty of Blessed Veronica's convent.



For such was the multitude gathered in Bethlehem for the census at that time that not a single room was to be had, and even the humble dwellings of poor widows were completely occupied with guests to their full capacity.

Saint Joseph was visibly anxious and saddened by this situation, for he realized that Mary was due to give birth very soon. Now at the time, the twilight of evening was fading to darkness, and night was falling fast. Joseph saw a small and primitive stable by the side of the road. And he said to Mary: "My dearest wife, it behooves us to find a place of shelter, for very soon it will be night. Let us enter that little stable over there, for it is the only place where we will have a roof over our heads." The Blessed Virgin promptly agreed to this and gracefully descended from her donkey.

She then said to Joseph: "Joseph, my time of delivery is drawing nigh!" At once, Joseph replied: "I will go and engage midwives and maidservants to assist you in the birth." But at this, Mary merely laughed gently at his noble intentions, and the unlikelihood of his fulfilling them. "Do not laugh, Mary, for this is a most serious matter!" said Joseph. "You are a first-time mother, and you may well need help in the delivery." And so, the noble Saint Joseph went forth into the silent darkness of the night.

At this point, Veronica's vision stopped, and she once more returned to her usual awareness of the external world. She

realized then that it was now almost time for the Office of Vigils.<sup>6</sup> So, having completed these prayers, she returned to prayer and meditation until dawn.

She was soon drawn back to her vision. She saw the Blessed Mary still in the stable in which Joseph had placed her. But she saw with her also now the infant Jesus, the Savior of the world! He lay peacefully in the manger, and with one hand, He clasped lovingly His Mother, while with the other He held onto the straw in the manger. Then, holy Mary removed her own veil from her head and tore it cleanly in two. She used half of it to cover the small body of her newborn Son, and she placed the other half under Him to shield His sacred form from the straw upon which He rested.

Now Joseph, her husband, was not present at this time and had not been present at the time of the birth of Our Lord. But now, he arrived back, accompanied by three women. These three women were afraid to enter the stable, for it was filled with a brilliant and heavenly light, which glowed all around the infant Jesus and His glorious Mother in glorious splendor. But Saint Joseph himself went in with no hesitation and fell to his knees in adoration before the Son of Mary, whom he knew also to be the true Son of God.

Seeing Joseph enter, two of the women took courage and went inside also. But, the third was still hesitant and said: "I have heard the oracles that a most pure and immaculate Virgin

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<sup>6</sup> Probably sometime between 2:00–3:00 a.m.

would give birth to the Messiah. But unless I see it, I shall not believe!” And then she entered the stable and reached out her hand to touch the radiant Virgin Mother, as if to verify the reality of the virgin birth. And upon touching her, a burning sensation at once overcame the woman. And this fiery pain that seized upon her almost struck her down.<sup>7</sup>

Then, suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared and spoke to the afflicted woman. “Ask for mercy from holy Mary,” the angel said, “for doubting the truth which the prophets foretold about her! But now reach out your hand in adoration to touch the Son who has been born to her, and then you shall find relief.” This she accordingly did, and as soon as she touched the baby Jesus, her pain instantly vanished. And the three women all went forth and proclaimed to everyone that the Savior of the world had indeed been born.

But, O Reader, let us return our attention to Jesus, lying in the manger. Blessed Veronica witnessed the celestial Virgin kneeling before Him, with her hands joining in adoring prayer. An ox and donkey were there in the stable, and these likewise venerated the Child on bended knees. An angel of the Lord was present too, who also worshipped Him most humbly. Indeed, above the stable there was an entire multitude of holy angels, who sang together in a glorious chorus: “Glory to God in the highest!”

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<sup>7</sup> This seems to correspond with an incident contained in *The Protoevangelium of James*, 19–20.

This song of the angelic multitude resonated through the entire celestial firmament, and it was of a beauty and complexity which transcended the capacity of mortal ears to hear or understand. And the stable in which Our Lord rested was bathed in a refulgent light, which illuminated the darkness of the night such that it shone more brightly than the height of day.

Now there were some shepherds in this region, keeping watch over their flocks during the long hours of the night. They perceived this inexplicable and miraculous light from a distance, and they were terrified and fell on their faces. But then an angel appeared to them, and the same heavenly radiance which they had seen also shone where they were situated. Their hearts were filled with astonishment and confusion, but that angel said: “Fear not, O shepherds! For, behold, I bring to you good news of the greatest joy. For in the city of David there has been born the One who is destined to be the Savior of the world! Go now, that you may worship Him! And this shall be the sign that you will see: an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and resting in a stable.”

So, the shepherds hastened forth, bewildered and stupefied by all the marvels they had witnessed. And the flocks of sheep which they protected also followed them, as if eager to accompany them to worship the Infant Christ. Indeed, the angel of the Lord, who was there present, explained to Veronica that all created things—the stars, the sun, the moon, and even the beasts, birds, plants, and stones—were filled with an

overwhelming desire to pay homage to their Incarnate Creator and eternal King.

The saintly virgin, Veronica, was amazing and awestruck by all of these things. She herself joined the others in adoring the holy Baby upon bended knees, but she felt utterly incapable of reaching out her hand to touch Him, or of uttering a single articulate word—such was the intensity of the love and awe-struck wonder which she felt for Him. Veronica related that she also witnessed many other mysterious and marvelous things, but she did not desire to share these with anyone else, for they surpassed what was permitted to living humans to know, except by divine revelation.

In the days which followed Christmas, after Veronica had attended the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass three times and received each time the sacred Body of Christ, she was again taken up in a mystical ecstasy. She related that she was not permitted to disclose to anyone what she experienced and witnessed in these visions.

But she did say how, after receiving the Holy Eucharist, she had a vision of how the heavens themselves exulted in fervent jubilation at the birth of the Savior. It was as if they flowed with celestial honey and glowed with the radiant whiteness of freshly fallen snow. And a vast circle of resplendent gold appeared in the highest sphere of the firmament. Within this circle was the Virgin Queen, holding in her arms the Divine Infant. And though but a tender Baby, He spoke in words

which were perfectly articulated and fully comprehensible to Veronica's ears. But as to what He said to her, she was silent; for, she explained, it was not permissible to repeat these secret words to any mortal ears.