

IN MEMORIAM

Don Domenico Leone, S.D.B
Apostle of the Shroud in Spain
Turin 1890 - Barcelona 1989

On the 17th of April, 1989, the priest Domenico Leone was called to the vision of Christ in glory, so many times proclaimed by him in conferences on the Holy Shroud. On May 22 he would have completed 99 years; at that age, very few were left who knew him in the times of his fullest activity.

Born in Turin not far from the Church of Santa Maria della Consolata, he first saw the Shroud during the solemn exposition of 1898; he was a child of eight years. All his life, he carried with him the memory of that encounter.

Ordained in 1913, his first assignment was a chaplaincy to the Alpine troops during World War I. His service in these mountains continued until, in 1928, he was offered the choice between a chaplaincy on board a ship or to Italian immigrants in Spain. Good alpinist that he was, he declared that he preferred the terra firma, and so he was transferred to Barcelona, where he remained, some 61 years, until his death.

After the foundation of the *Cultores Sanctae Sindonis*, affiliated with the Confraternity of the Holy Shroud, Don Leone was appointed official delegate to Spain, and from that moment his activities to make the Shroud known were intensified, with hundreds of lectures and exhibits and countless articles. In 1950, he initiated the *Biblioteca Sindoniana*, a series of books presenting translations of the works of Barbet, Hynek, Judica Cordiglia, etc., as well as Spanish authors. Eleven books, one a year; but the project had to be discontinued because of many difficulties.

A pioneer contribution to sindonology was his study on the copies of the Shroud in Spain: *El Santo Sudario en España*, published in 1952 with a second edition in 1959. An invaluable documentation that cost Don Leone many sacrifices in work and weariness, and disappointments caused by the lack of understanding on the part of some persons to whom he turned for information or the necessary permission — not always granted — to photograph the copies.

Retired to a home for elderly clergy in Barcelona, he felt more and more alone as his friends numbered ever fewer; he was particularly saddened by the death of Humbert II, his friend of many years. It was by Don Leone's suggestion, and the good will of the Sovereign, that the Shroud was bequeathed to the Church.

When he reached the age of 90, Don Leone prepared the funeral cards to be sent at his death. Alongside the prayers, he did not fail to place the picture of the Face of Jesus, resting upon a reproduction of the Holy Shroud.

In conclusion, I cannot do less than describe the impression I always had every time I had occasion to celebrate the Holy Mass with Don Leone. The last time was in Imperia, September 1963; a private Mass in celebration of his Jubilee in the priesthood. His dignity and devout concentration created an atmosphere of intense fervor that infused into those who were present; an experience that, after more than a quarter-century, remains for me a vivid and indelible memory.

LUIGI FOSSATI, S.D.B.

