

Fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 14:20, "In that day, 'HOLINESS TO THE LORD' shall be engraved on the bells of the horses." The third nail was tossed into the Adriatic Sea to calm a whirlpool. Eventually, the Holy Nails were carried by Louis of France to Sainte-Chapelle. Nails touched to the True Cross are considered sacred by many people.

Nails are widely associated with the axis mundi (axis of the world) or North Star around which many people believed the flat universe spun. The polar Star was considered the king of the heavenly bodies. The axis mundi also served as a tunnel linking the realms of the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. The Cross, being the center of the Christian world, having borne its King, and being a link between heaven and earth, may be thought of as an axis mundi.

Nails are an attribute of various saints including Ingratia, Pantalon, Severus, and Cyrus who were martyred with their use. Israel's enemy, Sisera, had his temples pierced by the wooden nail or tent peg of Jael while he lay sleeping in her tent (Judges 4:17-24). Augustine considered this biblical scene symbolic of "the faith of the Church casting down the kingdom of the devil by the cross of Christ" (On the Morals of the Catholic Church).

Nails and their qualities are often used as a figures of speech. The "well-driven" nail's ability to fasten things firmly in place has caused it to be compared to proverbs and teachings which keep their adherents from straying from the path of righteousness (Eccl. 12:11). St. John Chrysostom, remarks on St. Paul's use of the name of Christ in the book of the Corinthians that he fastens his readers "as with nails to the name of Christ." Commenting on Christ's warning that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," St. Paul also warns against being "nailed to the things below" with a special emphasis on the dangers of nailing one's heart and mind to money (Mt. 6:21).

\*(excerpted from: users.netnitco.net)

# NAILS

## Symbols of Christ's Passion



**Reliquary consisting of a nail found by St. Helena used in the Passion of Christ... located at the Church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem in Rome, Italy**

## "They Have Pierced My Hands And My Feet"

(Ps 21:17)

\*Nails are symbols of Christ's Passion or Crucifixion because they were used to fasten Jesus to His holy cross. The use of these instruments of torture fulfilled the psalmist's messianic prophecy "They pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps 21:17).

There is another prophecy which predicts, "They will look on Me whom they have pierced" (Zech 12:10). The Apostle John writes that this verse refers to the piercing of Christ's body with a spear when the legs of the thieves crucified with Him were broken (John 19:37). However, many believe that this prediction will be fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ when they expect a worldwide vision of our Lord descending with outstretched and pierced hands to signify the final offer of salvation. It is written that at the time of the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy there will be mourning in Judah such as the mourning heard when the righteous King Josiah was slain. God had promised not to punish the wicked kingdom of Judah during Josiah's lifetime. So his death signaled the onslaught of the curses promised to those who disobeyed the Law found in the scroll in the Temple (Zech 12:10-14). The Final Judgment with its promise of salvation for the righteous and destruction for the wicked would closely follow this vision of the returning Christ. Sister Faustina Kowalski claims that during this present age God treats the inhabitants of the earth with compassion because he views us through the pierced hands and feet of Jesus.

The Apostle Thomas refused to believe in the resurrection until he saw and touched the prints of the nails in Christ's hands (John 20:25). Ever since, the slow to believe have been referred to as "Doubting Thomases."

On early crucifixes four nails were used to crucify Jesus. During the medieval period this number was changed to three in honor of the Holy Trinity especially when the nails were painted apart from the cross as symbols of the Passion. When three nails are used, a single nail

pierces both of the victim's feet. Fr. James Groenings, S.J., in the Passion of Jesus and its Hidden Meaning, claims that the four nail holes were discovered on the True Cross and that the stigmata of St. Francis reflected the use of four nails during the crucifixion of Christ. Because of the shape of their dried buds, clove flowers are symbols of the Holy Nails. "Clove" comes from the Latin "clavus" meaning "nail."

Roman soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, but many writers claim that it was truly "men's wickedness" which nailed Him there. Some of them, becoming aware of their own sinful nature, remarked that it was their own hand which made the hammer fall, and drove the nails that fastened the Redeemer's hands and feet to the cruel tree.

Various writers have put forth that it was our sins, our "old man," or our sensual appetites which were nailed to the cross in the form of Christ. St. Paul writes to the Colossians that it was the Old Testament Law which was cancelled and nailed to the Holy Cross so that it might no longer condemn us (Col. 2:13-16). Followers of Christ should figuratively be nailed to the Cross which is His doorpost in emulation of the Israelite slaves who, refusing freedom, had their ears pierced on the doorpost of their master as a sign of their desire to remain slaves beyond the years of their indenture (Exodus 21:2-6).

Tradition relates that the Holy Nails were discovered about 300 hundred years after the Crucifixion by Constantine's mother the Empress Helena. According to this story, the cross, the nails, and the INRI inscription had been placed in Christ's tomb which was then covered with a huge mound of earth by a group of pagan who soon built a temple for Venus upon it in order to hide the evidence of Christ's Passion from the world. After unearthing the True Cross, Helena knelt and prayed for the recovery of the Holy Nails. Miraculously, the nails appeared before her on the ground gleaming as if they had been formed of gold. Upon returning home, the Empress used two of the nails to ensure her son's safety. One nail was placed in his crown or helmet and another was formed into a bridle for his horse. According to her way of thinking, the second nail