



Embers

FIRE Committee Newsletter

Lenten Series - 2015

The FIRE Committee would like to share the following reflections as we begin the Lenten Season.

We will be sharing a new reflection each Friday, presented by CMA member Thomas McGovern, MD, inspired by his recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Prior to each reflection, we offer the Prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian ([more history here](#)), a very timely reflection asking for his intercession in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, who are undergoing a share in the Passion of Our Lord.

Each week, as part of our prayer, we will also meditate on the aspects of sin in our lives, through understanding more deeply the seven capital sins as we also pray for growth in the corresponding virtues.

May we keep all of our CMA members in prayer during this special liturgical season.

God bless you!

FIRE Committee

Everybody Knows

Everybody knows that thousands of people were crucified for hundreds of years before Christ was crucified on Calvary.

And everybody knows that, because of the numerous crucifixions in antiquity, there is ample archaeological evidence for crucifixion, particularly as depicted in religious art.

And everybody knows that, because of the crucial importance of the Crucifixion to Christians, there are abundant depictions of the Crucifixion in the artwork of the first centuries of Christianity.

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And everybody knows that Jesus sweat blood in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And everybody knows that archaeology, the Bible, history, and medicine have determined how Christ was affixed to the cross, how he suffered on the cross, and how he died.

And everybody is wrong.

Evidence for the Passion

Meditation Topic for the 1st Week of Lent

The words translated as 'cross' from Greek (stauros) and Latin (crux) in ancient documents refer to upright posts or stakes, and the Greek verb (stauroo) refers either to suspension or impaling (on a single upright as on a skewer). Therefore, the vast majority of writings from antiquity that have been said to speak of crucifixions denote various types of suspensions on upright posts (either during or *after* execution). The meaning of a Cross having intersecting vertical and horizontal parts seems to come only *after* the Crucifixion of Christ. Only a handful of ancient Greek and Latin writings describe affixing a victim to an upright with nails that leads to a slow, painful death.

Only one piece of archaeological evidence has been found that supports the use of crucifixion in antiquity - and this evidence demonstrates a different method of affixing the victim to the cross than that depicted in any Crucifixion art!

Early Christians were reticent to portray the Crucifixion while it was still a legal form of capital punishment in the Roman Empire. No example of Crucifixion drawings have been found in the catacombs. Two instances of graffiti (anti-Christian and blasphemous in one case!) have been found in Italy dated to the time before Constantine abolished crucifixion. The first instance of the Crucifixion in religious artwork is not found until A.D. 420-430.

The physician-evangelist Luke wrote that Jesus' "sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). In the last 10 years, there have been multiple cases of so-called 'hematidrosis' reported, and we finally have one case of biopsy confirmation. It's not bloody sweat! Although there is blood - and it may mix on the skin surface with sweat.

Although many medical articles, drawings, paintings, and movies have depicted the Crucifixion, and even if we assume that the Shroud of Turin depicts not only *a* crucified man, but *the* Crucified man, Jesus Christ, we *still* do not know precisely how Jesus was affixed to the Cross, the nature of his sufferings, or the medical cause of his death. In fact, from the Gospels, we only know that his hands were nailed because St. Thomas mentions wanting to put his fingers in the "nail marks" in Jesus' hands (John 20:25). We *assume* his feet were nailed, but the Gospels don't say that.

In the coming weeks of Lent, we will consider what we do know about Christ's sufferings as an aid to entering more deeply into the accounts of his passion.

Comments and Suggestions for the Embers Newsletter:

We look forward to your comments and suggestions for the Lenten Embers Newsletters. You can submit your comments and suggestions via email to info@cathmed.org or by clicking this [link](#).

<p>Catholic Medical Association's 84th ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE OCTOBER 1-3, 2015 <i>Join us in Philadelphia, PA!</i></p>	<p>Healing the WOUNDED CULTURE Bringing the Wholeness of Christ to Humanity</p> 
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