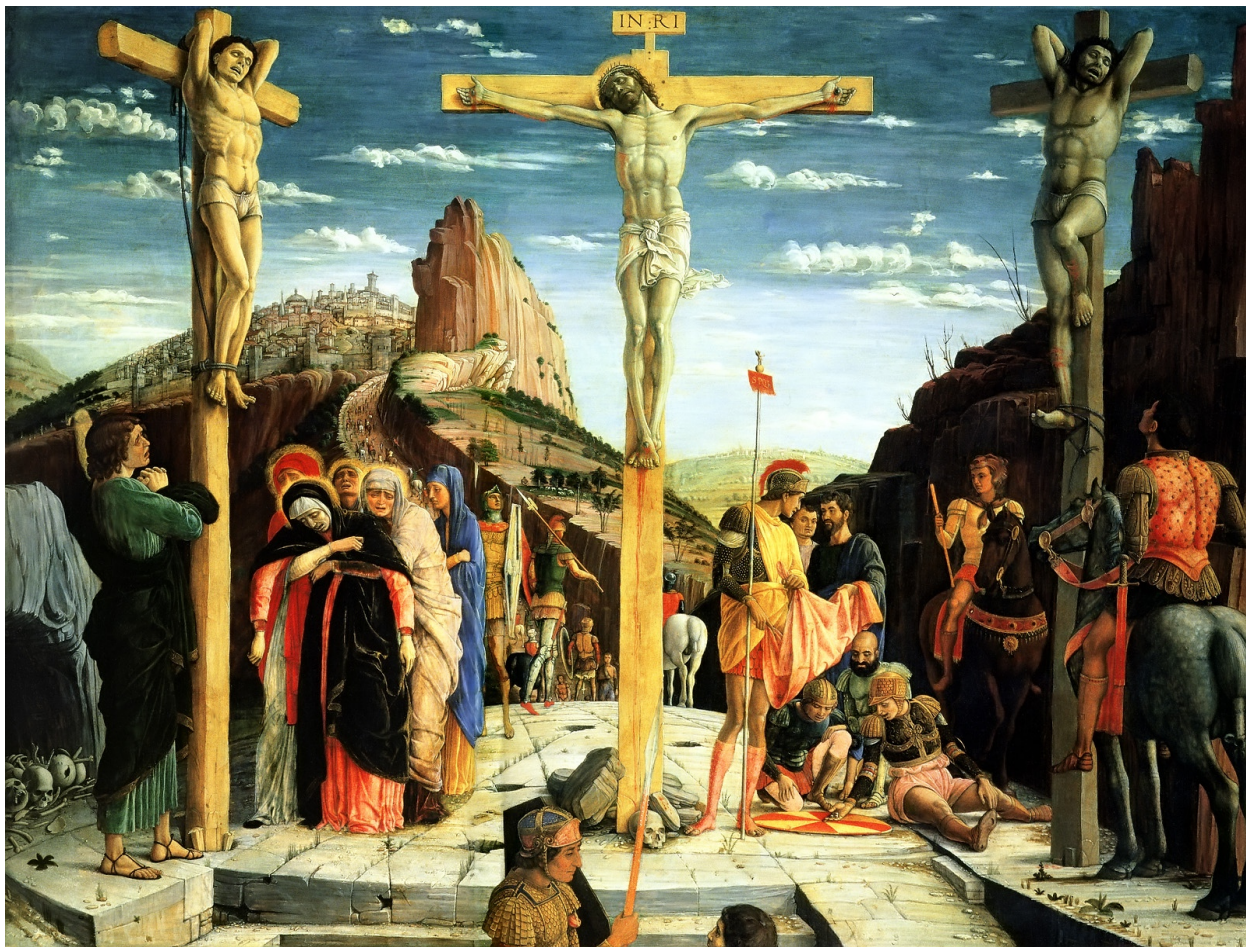
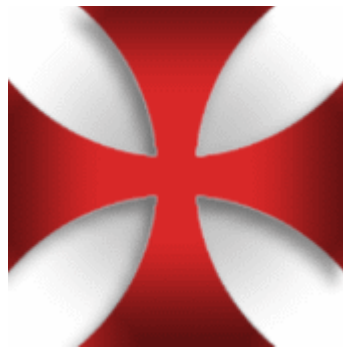


# THE TRUE CROSS RELICS

Real parts of the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified on



By Bishop Ralph Napierski



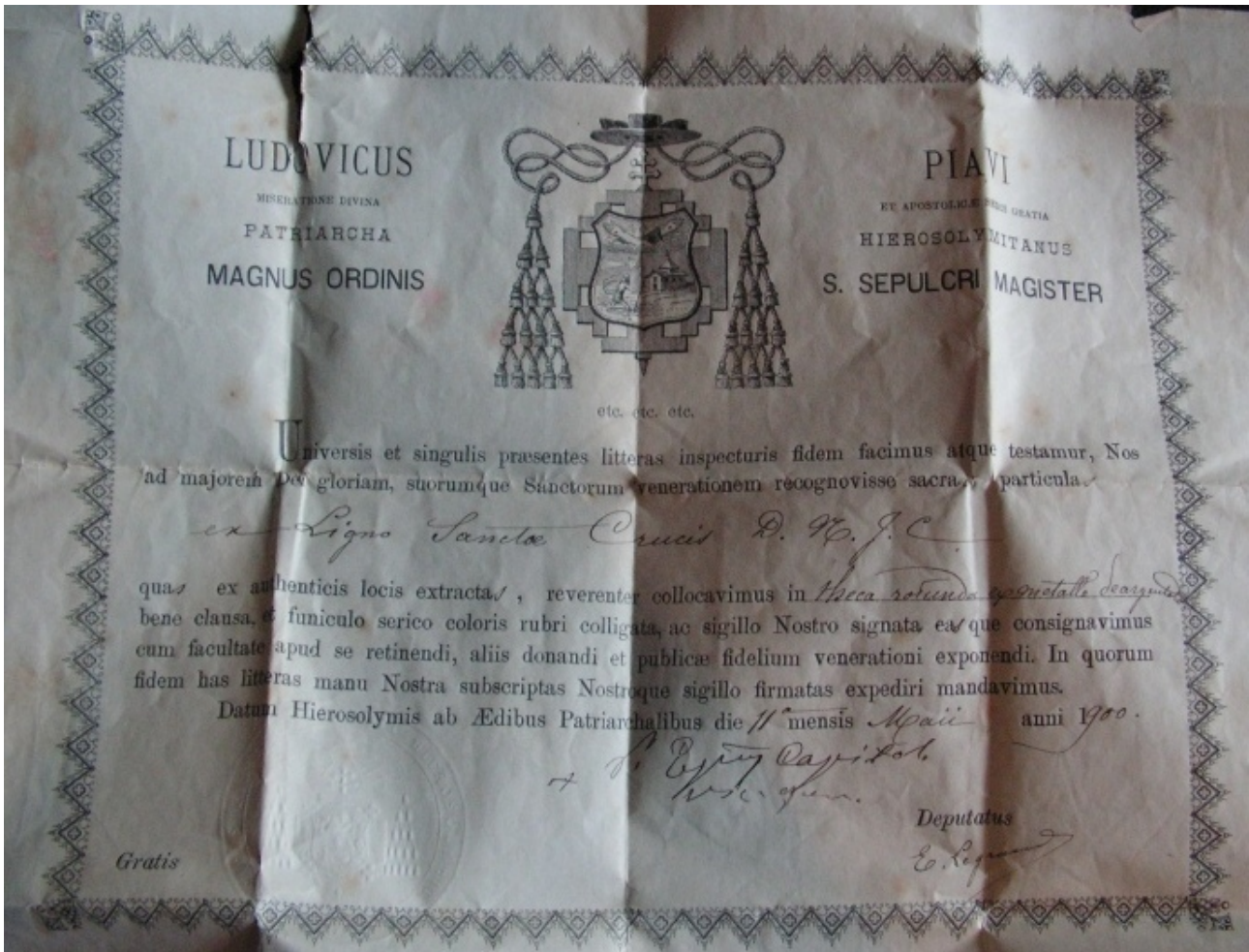
**Bishop Ralph Napierski**

**is making  
relics of the true cross  
available for mankind.**



**The reliquary contains real parts of the cross on which Jesus was crucified on**

## CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY



### **Authenticity certificate and letter of recommendation of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Luigi Piavi, the Grandmaster of the Knights of the Tomb OESSH**

Ludovicus Piavi  
By divine mercy and the grace of the Holy See  
Patriarch of Jerusalem  
Grandmaster of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Tomb

We are giving our testimony, we give the faith to everybody who shall inspect these present certification, we had recognized the authenticity of the sacred parts of the Wood of the Holy Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ which have been extracted from the authentic location.

And for the greater glory of God  
we recommend it for the veneration by the Saints.

We have reverently placed the relic in a round case well closed with red silk cords and sealed it with our wax seal.

**Issued from the patriarch office on May 11, 1900**



## The History of the Holy Cross

Already the first Christians guarded the knowledge about the holy places, where Jesus Christ worked during His ministry. This knowledge was continuously passed on and is part of the living tradition of His church.

Already the **Apostle Paul** traveled with a delegation of the Greek congregation to Jerusalem Anno Domini 57 and they visited the places and relics of Christ which since then the Christian pilgrimages have been witnessed and documented.

**Bishop Meliton of Sardes** (Minor Asia) came to visit Jerusalem Anno Domini 160, and when **Alexander of Cappadocia** (a disciple of Clemens of Alexandria) visited the holy sights in Jerusalem to pray there in A.D. 212 the joy of the local Christian community was so great that they did not let him travel home but spontaneously chose him as their bishop.

The **Church Father Origenes** came in the years 215 and 230 to visit and for research.

In the year 325 **Makarios, Bishop of Jerusalem** in Nicea, met the **emperor Constantine**. Bishop Makarios told the emperor about the places of Christ's passion (Golgotha, the place of Christ's Crucifixion and the tomb of Christ), which the emperor Hadrian let fill up with soil and then had a temple for Aphrodite built on it.

This was utmost desecration to the Christians at their most holy place and it was part of a plan pursued by Hadrian to integrate holy places and Jesus Christ into his religion and at the same time proclaim his own dominion at the same time.

It was a temple for Aphrodite because, accordingly to a legend she climbed down into Hades (the underworld) to resurrect the young Adonis/Tammuz from the dead.

Emperor Hadrian tried geographically and philosophically to transfer this story to Jesus in order to deceive and tempt the Christians.

When he let the platform fill with the soil he let stand out the top of the hill of Golgotha and put on its peak a statue of Aphrodite, who had a son called Golgos.

To complete this deceit Hadrian also desecrated the grotto of Jesus Christ into an Adonis/Tammuz shrine and built over the Jerusalem temple the temple of the three highest Roman gods.

Emperor Constantine immediately acted and ordered to remove the pagan temples that had been erected by Hadrian over Golgotha and over the holy tomb.

Furthermore, there were to be built a beautiful mausoleum above Christ's tomb and over

Golgotha a monumental basilica.

Constantine declared these projects top priority and sent his mother, the **empress Helena**, who had been a Christian since A.D. 312 and who had been told in a dream that she was to find the true Cross of Jesus Christ.

The project started immediately in the same year of **325**. When the soil that had been piled up by Hadrian was removed in the presence of **empress Helena, the mother of Constantine**, the grotto (cistern) was also discovered, in which the true cross of Christ was kept together with the sign that said 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews', three nails and the two crosses of the two criminals, who had also been crucified at the same time. (The grotto is now underneath the church of the tomb). **The cross was laid over a sick woman, who was healed instantly.**

Many church historians of the fourth and fifth century write about it: Gelasius, Rufinus, Theodoret, Sozomenos, Sokrates Scholasticus, Alexander Monachus, Holy Ambrosius von Mailand, Holy Chrisostomos, Holy Paulinus von Nola and many others.

The church of the tomb was finally consecrated on **14 th September 335**, which was the tenth anniversary of the finding of the cross.

The monumental Martyrion-Basilica was built exactly above the place of the place of the safekeeping of the cross. (Not above the peak of the hill of Golgotha that was in the inner court under the open sky).



Constantine and his mother Helena

**Helena divided the miraculous wood of the cross into some parts.** One fragment remained in Jerusalem, another she sent to her son in Constantinople, and a third part she brought to Rome.

A part of this and a part of the sign with the inscription 'I NAZARINUS R...' is being kept in the **Basilica di S. Croce**, one of the seven main churches in Rome. In the year 1998 an in-depth investigation by a commission of the Vatican and seven Israeli experts for antique inscriptions (comparative palaeography) was carried out.

They dated the age of the inscription back to the first century, the time of Jesus Christ.



Already Anno Domini 349  
the **Holy Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem,**

said that the true cross of Christ was part by part distributed  
from Jerusalem into the whole world.

He documents the practice of distributing small parts of the  
holy wood.

The church of the Roman city Tixer in Mauretania had a cross relic since the year 359, the inscription of the altar is now exhibited in the Louvre.

Presumably even earlier the North-African Roman city of Rasgunia at the Cape Matifu also held a cross relic.

Before A.D. 450 empress Galla Placida built the Santa-Croce-Church in Ravenna for the safekeeping of a cross relic.

Around the year A.D. 455 Juvenal, the Patriarch of Jerusalem sent a cross particle to Pope Leo.

When the **Holy Paulinus of Nola** received a part of the cross from bishop John of Jerusalem A.D. 401, and sent a part to his friend Sulpicius Severus, he wrote: 'Receive a big gift in a small case and use it as a weapon against the latest dangers and as an insurance for everlasting protection.'

He made clear that 'even the smallest particle of the cross contains the total power of the cross of Jesus Christ'.



We have an interesting **report of the nun Egeria**, who traveled to the church of the tomb to take part in the Good Friday mass. She describes very precise in all details, including, how the faithful kissed the cross.

Touching the relic with one's hands was forbidden and behind the cross was sitting the bishop and the pilgrims kissing the cross were surrounded by the watchful eyes of deacons, as there had been an incident, at which somebody had stolen parts of the the cross by biting them off the cross!

Hence the office of the **Staurophylax (cross keeper)** was introduced, a priest, who was responsible for the safety of the cross relic.

A well-known Staurophylax of the Jerusalem church was **Porphyrius, the later bishop of Gaza**, \*A.D. 18 th March 395, + 5 th/ 26t th February 420.

That some Staurophylax had their own way of safekeeping the cross relics shows amongst others the case of the Spanish Staurophylax Toribius, who held his office under the Patriarch Juvenal (358-451).

When he returned to Astorge to become a bishop he had a part of the cross relic that is one of the biggest in the world in his luggage and that is being kept today in the mountainous monastery Santo Toribio de Liebana near Santander.

**Anno Domini 614** the Church of the Tomb was damaged by fire during the siege of Jerusalem through the Sassanadian ruler **Chosroes II**. 90000 Christians and the priests were killed. The Jerusalem part of the Holy Cross was taken to Ktesiphon by General Sharbaraz. As a consequence **Emperor Heraklius** became the first crusader with the support of Patriarch Sergios of Constantinopel. He moved out with an army to free the Holy Cross. Already the first encounter with his army led to the retreat of the Persians and by 627 he defeated the army of Chosreos completely.

Furious about the defeat the High King ordered the execution of his general and the disinheritance of his son, who let him in return incarcerated and torture to death to become High King himself. The new Persian king asked Heraklius for peace. Heraklius agreed under the condition of the return of all relics, the retreat from all occupied territories and the freedom of all prisoners. In May 628 the solemn return of the True Cross took place. Right on time for the feast of the discovery of the Cross the Emperor processed in triumph with the part of the cross into Constantinopel, where it was erected in a thanksgiving mass in the Hagia-Sophia Cathedral.

When the winter was over the emperor left again to bring the part of the cross to Jerusalem.

On **May 3rd 629** he entered the holy city in the presence of Patriarch Zacharias, who had been freed from imprisonment.

At the city gate the emperor got off his horse, laid his crown, his shoes and his robe down, and carried the True Cross of Christ bare feet in his white undergarment on the path, on which Jesus Christ was led to Golgotha 600 years earlier.

The church of the tomb was provisionally (in a smaller version) rebuilt by him.

Already nine years later (**A.D. 638**) Jerusalem was conquered by Muslim Arabs.

**The early Muslim rulers protected the Christian sights in Jerusalem and forbade their destruction.**

Nonetheless the Patriarch of Jerusalem had as a precaution the cross relic divided into 19 parts in 638, from which he sent 15 to other Christian bishops seats of the East:

Constantinopel, Cyprus, Antioch, Georgia, Crete, Odessa, Alexandria, Ascalon and Damascus.

**Bishop Arculf** reports in **670** of the **wonderful scent** emanating from the cross relic 'as if all flowers of the world were in this relic'.

He describes especially that there was a good smelling **fluid coming from the wood of the Holy Cross that healed people from illnesses.**



**Golgatha in the Church of the Tomb**



**The tomb of Jesus Christ in the actual Church of the Tomb**



**The actual Church of the Tomb**





**The crack in the rock of Golgatha**



**Cross relic in the Church of the Tomb**

On **18 th October 1009** the Church of the Tomb was destroyed on command of the Fatimid-khalif **Al-Hākīm bi-amri 'llāh** .

This fanatic persecuted Jews, Christians and Muslim brothers equally. A year later he let knock down the remaining rocks of the holy tomb.

An outcry went through the Western world, ever louder became the call for a liberation of the holy sights until the **crusades** spread over the Holy Land.

On **15 th July 1099** Jerusalem fell after a siege of only five weeks. The terrible slaughter carried out by many crusaders was extremely unchristian.



### **Godfrey of Bouillon,**

one of the leaders of the crusade, became Lord over the **Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem** and Protector of the Holy Tomb.

He ordered instantly the rebuilding of the Church of the Tomb.

The four cross relics had been hidden by orthodox Christians in the until 1055 improvised Church of the Tomb.

Side by side fighting for the liberation of Jerusalem and of the parts of the True Cross of Christ, with Godfrey of Bouillon was the great-ancestor of the Dabrova-Clan.

He was described as a foreign knight.

It could to this day not yet be verified that he was an descendant of the Benjaminites. (The Israelite tribe of Benjamin presented with Saul the first Israelite king. His kingly line was then taken over by David from the house of Judah. In Moses 5, 33:12 ff it is said that the tribe of Benjamin was favoured by the Lord and therefore highly in regard. When it came to a rift with the other eleven tribes, many of his descendants emigrated to Europe and to parts of Africa).



Because of his bravery during the crusade and of the liberation of Jerusalem the foreign knight of Godfrey of Bouillon was honoured with a coat of arms that depicts the hill of Golgotha with the True Cross of Christ, which is stylized and pointing also at the knighthood and framed by the crosses of the two criminals.

This coat of arms was later called **Dabrova**. At the end of the crusade he went from Jerusalem to Poland and started his noble family there, from which eventually comes forth the founder of **Corpus Dei**:

**Bishop Ralph Napierski.**



**A.D. 1114** the Patriarchial chapter of Jerusalem is dissolved and replaced by the Order association of Canons (Ordensverbund der Kanoniker) of the Holy Tomb.

Their monastery was erected on the ruins of the entrance hall of the Constantinian Martyrion-basilica. That was the foundation of the **Knights of the Tomb of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Tomb in Jerusalem (Ordo Equestris Sancti Sepulcri Hierosolymitani, in short: OESSH).**

In 1847 the Latin Patriarchy Jerusalem was rebuilt; Pope Pius IX. Reorganized as a consequence the old Knighthood of the Holy Tomb with his Apostolic Decree 'Cum Multa' from 24th January 1868 and designed it as a formal papal religious knightorder. The Order was at first directly assigned to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who was also the Grand Master of the Order: 1847-1872:

Patriarch Giuseppe Valerga, 1872-1889: Patriarch Vincenzo Bracco, 1889-1907: Patriarch Luigi Piavi. From then on the Popes have personally led the Order:

1907-1914: Pope Pius X., 1914-1922: Pope Benedict XV., 1922-1928: Pope Pius XI. Until Pope Pius XII. with the statutes of 1949 established a cardinal of the curia as the Grand Master.



In Germany many bishops belong to the Knights of the Tomb like Archbishop Zollitsch and Cardinal Marx

**The parts of the Cross, on which Jesus Christ was crucified that are now in the possession of CORPUS DEI stem from the Patriarch of Jerusalem Luigi Piavi, Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Tomb in Jerusalem.**



**Bishop Ralph Napierski together with Cardinal Reinhard Marx in Rome. Cardinal Marx was chairman of the German Bishops' Conference and is Grand Prior of the German part of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre OESSH.**

Some of the cross relics that were brought to Rome by Empress Helena are still being kept there to this very day. Her palace was built into a church and is nowadays the church **Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.**



**Bishop Ralph and one of his priests visited this Church “Santa Croce in Gerusalemme” in Rome, where parts of the true cross and the Titulus are guarded:**



Inside the church is the so-called Helena Chapel, and the floor was said to be covered with soil of the Holy Land. Therefore the grounds were rewritten into Holy Land, which gave the church its strange name of Gerusalemme.

The inscription inside in the Helena Chapel reads: 'Here is kept the holy soil of the mountain of Calvary of Jerusalem, of the blessed Helena in the crypt, with which she above erected this chapel with the name Jerusalem.'

There were some smaller and the biggest known cross relics in the Helena chapel until A.D. 1570. Due to the high humidity they had to be transferred to a higher floor.

In the year 1629 the great wood part of the Holy Cross was on instruction of Pope Urban VIII from S Croce in Gerusalemme to S Peter's Dome. There it received its own chapel in one of the four columns of the mighty cuppula.

Since then the blessing of Good Friday is being given with this part of the Holy Cross in S Peter's Dome. At first from the balcony of the Helena Chapel and then finally until today from the opposite lying Veronica Chapel.

To this day in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme is to be found the half inscription sign of the True Cross:



The Cross-Inscription ~ Titulus Crucis ~



Bishop Ralph  
with parts of the True  
Cross and the Titulus

The half Titulus, which was brought to the church by Empress Helena, spent the longest time of its stay hidden away behind stones.

The Titulus was built into the wall **Anno Domini 410** to protect it from the plundering through the Goths, who took Rome under Alarich.

**A.D. 1143** it was rediscovered at a refurbishment through Cardinal Gerardus (who later became Pope Lucius II). He had the the Titulus hidden in a leaden case sealed with his seal again behind walls above the arch of triumph in the Helena Chapel, which was probably used already 410 or 427 after the renovation of Emperor Valentine.

At restoration works (ordered by Cardinal Mendoza) at the church the bricks and the Titulus were discovered underneath the cement hidden on **1stst February 1492**.

After the founding of the Cisalpine Republic in **1767** came the relic again in danger, when French troops marched into Rome and arrested Pope Pius VI.

There were confiscations and plundering of churches and monasteries. In **1798** the representatives of the republic demanded the surrender of the Cross-Inscription-Sign. But the remaining monk, who had been the housekeeper had hidden it well and stayed silent. From **1803** the stolen empty reliquaries were replaced by new ones.

Anno Domini **1870** the Titulus was examined by the French scientist Rohault de Fleury. He published a study about it and compared the Titulus with other well-known samples of scriptures.

An interesting result of his research:

The statement of the 'enlightened' skeptics that all relics of the True Cross put together would be enough to build a whole ship was proven wrong by him:

He calculated mathematically the volume of all relics of the True Cross from all European cathedrals and proved that all together would only make the third of the Roman cross.

In the 20th century this research was again looked into:

With official permission of the Vatican **Michael Hesemann** has examined again the relic of the Titulus of the cross of Jesus Christ. The Cross-Inscription Sign was dated by seven experts for comparative paleography (the established method for comparative palaeography for inscriptions) to the **first century, which confirmed its authenticity wonderfully**.

The experts were:

**Dr. Gabriel Barkay, Professor Dr. Hanan Eshel, Frau Dr. Leah di Segni (Hebrew University Jerusalem), Prof. Dr. Israel Roll, Prof. Ben Isaac(Tel Aviv) und Professor Carsten Peter Thiede (University Basel und University Beer-Sheva) by and it followed a confirmation also by Prof. Maria-Luisa Rigato of the Pontifical University Gregoriana in Rome.**



**On 17 th December 1998 Hesemann was received personally by Pope John Paul II to present the findings of his research about this important relic.**

Later the Pope expressed his admiration and recognition in a letter for this extensive study.

Michael Hesemann’s book became a bestseller in Germany and in Italy.

It also inspired the dissertation of Dr. Maria-Luisa Rigato, Rome, and the international bestseller “The Quest for the True Cross” by Thiede/d’Ancona.



**Michael Hesemann CSC, OEBDC**

**Bishop Ralph received the True Cross relic with the help of Michael Hesemann who also confirmed the authenticity of the Relic of the Shroud of Turin that is in possession of Bishop Ralph.**





**Michael Hesemann and Bishop Ralph**





**Bishop Ralph celebrates Mass and preaches in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican with the True Cross Relic**



Bishop Ralph meeting with cardinals and bishops in the Vatican: Cardinal Dolan, Cardinal Angelo Scola .....

**Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan**

Archbishop of New York

President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops