ARMA CHRISTI · INSTRUMENTA PASSIONIS

The Arma Christi

The "weapons of Christ": the instruments of His Passion, by which the King of Glory overcame sin, death and the devil. Medieval Christians meditated on each as a step of the Passion, and painted, carved and blazoned them like a royal coat of arms.

"Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi, quia per sanctam Crucem tuam redemisti mundum."



Christ as Man of Sorrows amid the Arma Christi, Umbrian, 15th century · Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne

WHY VENERATE THEM?

We do not honor wood and iron for themselves, but for Him whom they touched. Each instrument recalls a moment of His love: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Gazing on them, the soul learns compunction, gratitude and the cost of sin.

FEASTS OF THE PASSION IN LENT

Before 1960 many dioceses kept a Friday feast of the Passion each week of Lent:

Friday after Ash Wednesday	**Crown of Thorns**
after 1st Sunday of Lent	**Holy Lance and Nails**
after 2nd Sunday	**Holy Shroud**
after 3rd Sunday	**Five Holy Wounds**
after 4th Sunday	**Most Precious Blood**
after Passion Sunday	**Seven Sorrows of Our Lady**

Thirty Pieces of Silver — Mt 26:15
The price of betrayal paid to Judas — the value of a slave.

Lantern and Torches — Jn 18:3
Carried by the band that came by night to Gethsemane.

The Kiss of Judas — Lk 22:48
"Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?"

Sword and Ear of Malchus — Jn 18:10
Peter's rash zeal, and Christ's healing of His enemy.

The Rooster — Mt 26:74–75
Peter's threefold denial — and his bitter tears of repentance.

Pillar and Cords — Jn 19:1
Our Lord bound to the column for the scourging.

The Scourges — Is 53:5
"By his bruises we are healed."

Crown of Thorns — Mt 27:29
Woven in mockery of the true King of kings.

Purple Robe and Reed — Mk 15:17–19
A mock cloak and scepter for "the King of the Jews."

Ewer and Basin — Mt 27:24
Pilate washes his hands of innocent blood.

The Cross — Jn 19:17
Borne to Calvary — the altar of the world's redemption.

Veil of Veronica — 6th Station
The Holy Face imprinted on the cloth of a compassionate woman.

Nails and Hammer — Jn 20:25
"They have dug my hands and feet" (Ps 21:17).

Title: INRI — Jn 19:19
Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum — in Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

Dice and Seamless Tunic — Jn 19:23–24
Lots cast for His garment, a figure of the Church's unity.

Sponge and Hyssop — Jn 19:29
Vinegar offered to the Lord who said, "I thirst."

The Holy Lance — Jn 19:34
Longinus opens His side: blood and water, the fount of the sacraments.

Ladder and Pincers — Jn 19:38
Tools of the Deposition, when His Body was taken down for burial.