



*Volto Santo di Lucca*  
**"The Holy Face of Lucca"**

Legend says that this crucifix floated ashore in Italy miraculously in 742.

Above is the much venerated wooden *corpus* of a crucifix. It is found on the right-hand nave of the Cathedral of San Martino, Lucca, Italy. Medieval legend claims that it was sculpted by Nicodemus, the man who Jesus told that he must be born from above by water and the Holy Spirit. Later, he assisted Joseph of Arimathea in placing the body of Christ in the tomb. The figure was said to be discovered in a cave in the Holy Land by "Bishop Gualfredo", who was guided to it in a dream. A boat without sails or crew then carried the image to the Tuscan port of Luni. The legend continues with many even more fantastic details.

Whatever its true history, the figure is believed to be one of the earliest surviving representations of the Christ's crucified body. Note that it presents Christ as King of World, or as we usually say, *Christus Rex*, Christ the King.

*The Good Friday Liturgy  
begins on Prayer Book  
Page 276*

(see back page)

## Crucifixion

We shudder to hear the specific details of our Lord's execution. Perhaps no more horrid method of killing a human being has ever been devised. It was developed by the Romans as a (1), method of execution, and (2), a method of torture and (3), a visible example to any who might dare to displease the Romans. The Romans first tried foot nailing alone or hand nailing alone. It produced, (coldly), less successful results. The Romans then hit upon the method used for Jesus: nailing hands and feet.

There were several designs for crosses. The most typical was shaped like a  $\tau$ . Outside the city gates where the roads from the hinterland came together, stout upright beams were planted in the soil. The very top of the beam was "necked down" into a tenon so that the mortise hole drilled through a crossbeam could be dropped in place, making the " $\tau$ ."

The typical execution was of a person who had first been ferociously whipped to weaken him (or her). The condemned was then forced to carry the crossbeam to the death site where he was stripped naked and then violently thrown to the ground by the four executioners. His arms were held down by three of the soldiers while a fourth drove the nails through the hands and into the crossbeam. After the hands were nailed (some scholars believe that the nails actually went through the wrists) the crossbeam was hoisted into place falling onto the necked down tenon with a jolting, agonizing thud. Finally, the feet were nailed.

During Christ's three hours on the cross other Gospel writers record that there was an unexplained darkness from noon to three. At his death they also recall an earthquake - the fault line is said to be visible still - which split the Temple veil that served to make it impossible for Jewish lay worshipers to see what went on when the clergy entered the holy confines.

Most people could survive on the cross for 24 to 48 hours. Eventually the hanging position made it difficult to breathe and the crucified died of asphyxiation. Jesus died in just three hours. It has been suggested that his swift death was a gracious act of the Father.