

# Is Veronica mentioned in the Bible?

No one by the name of Veronica is ever mentioned in the Bible, but tradition and legend assign the name to the woman who suffered for twelve years with a flow of blood until she touched the hem of Christ's garment and was healed (Mark 5:25-34; Matthew 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48).

According to the legend of Veronica, which has various modifications and evolutions throughout history, this same woman was present as Jesus Christ passed by on His way to be crucified. Moved by His suffering, she removed her head-cloth, or handkerchief, and gave it the Lord to wipe the sweat and blood from His face. When Jesus handed the cloth back to her, the image of His face remained imprinted on it. The fabled cloth became known as the Veil of Veronica, and the cloth itself was said to have miraculous curative properties.

The legend of Veronica—Saint Veronica in some traditions—is believed to have started in the writings of the early church historian Eusebius of Caesarea. In *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Church History), Eusebius includes an account of Jesus healing a woman from Caesarea Philippi who had suffered from a hemorrhage. In an extra-biblical book called *The Acts of Pilate*, the woman is identified as Veronica.

Later tradition explains that the Veil of Veronica was brought to Rome when Emperor Tiberius fell gravely ill with leprosy. Hearing of her miraculous cloth, the emperor summoned Veronica, who carried it to Rome and supposedly used it to cure him. After that, Veronica stayed in Rome, and, upon her death, bestowed the veil upon Pope Clement. The Veil of Veronica was eventually placed by Pope Urban VIII in an upper chapel of St. Peter's Church, where it is still held today. On ten different occasions throughout the

year, the veil is exhibited in a silver case to the Pope, cardinals, and faithful who enter the nave. Throughout history, however, several other relics in different regions of Spain, France, and Italy have been purported to be the original Veil of Veronica or an early copy of it.

Another form of the legend identifies Veronica as the granddaughter of Herod the Great and niece of Herodias, possibly stemming from the confusion of her name with Berenice, which in Latin is Veronica. The Latin words vera (meaning “true”) and icon (meaning “image”) eventually became Veronica, or “true image.” According to some accounts, the woman Veronica is simply a personification of the wondrous cloth—Veronica was the name of the cloth, and the legendary person evolved over time through the telling and retelling of the story.

In Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Methodism, and Lutheranism, Veronica is honored at the sixth Station of the Cross (Veronica Wipes Jesus’ Face), one of the fourteen meditative carvings depicting the passion of Christ.

While the legend of Veronica and her veil is convoluted and certainly not based in Scripture, the story of a bystander offering kindness to Jesus may well have some basis in fact.