

The Pope blesses the Santa Marta "statue of the Shroud"

The work of the sculptor Luigi Enzo Mattei was created starting from the anatomical data extrapolated from the Sacred Canvas. Made of clay on the occasion of the 2000 jubilee, it has now been donated to the Vatican. In our interview the sculptor tells genesis and details of his creation

Michele Raviart - Vatican City 16 December 2019, 16:34

A statue representing the body of Jesus reconstructed from the Holy Shroud was blessed this morning by Pope Francis on the sidelines of the Mass in Santa Marta. The work, entitled "The Body of the Man of the Shroud" was created for the Jubilee of 2000 by the sculptor Luigi Enzo Mattei and has now been donated to Francesco after being exhibited all over the world. The artist, already author of the "Porta Santa" of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, tells Vatican News of the details of the meeting with the Pope.

- It was an ideal meeting precisely because not only the Pope blessed the work but he also listened to the reasons why I rebuilt it and it was also an opportunity to make some important reflections on this testimony of faith and science at same time. I was also able to tell the Holy Father how I consider this figure not only as that of the Crucifix and of the Deposition, but also as that of the Risen One. The Resurrection is usually interpreted as a sort of "flight into the sky", but the change of state took place just as shown in the Shroud, which is a mysterious testimony of a mysterious fact.

Can you tell us about the specific words of appreciation that Pope Francis told you about this work?

R. - He said: "You were right to do a job like this" and he congratulated you. On this occasion I also donated to the Holy Father a statue of a Saint Joseph "thoughtful" for the fiftieth year after ordination. The Holy Father thanked and said that like Joseph guarded the little Jesus, another Joseph guarded the body of Jesus: Joseph of Arimathea. The Pope wrote something important about it, which I remembered that is, that the figure of the Shroud generates the amazement that one has when one meets someone who is waiting for you and this meeting is casual. This is very important because in these years in which the work has been seen very often it has had this role to amaze those who looked, beyond faith and belief.

Can you tell us about the genesis of this work?

R.- I made the work from 1998 to 2000 for the great jubilee. The idea was to do something that had not been done before, also because the Shroud was never reported in "3D" in a scientific way, but only with very fleeting interpretations. I did it in two years with the contribution of renowned scientists and statisticians, each of whom gave me scientific results, and not only, that concerned their sector. I have been a collector of these various instances up to the point of concretizing and making this character, which before, curiously, had never been represented with that attention that was needed instead, thus involving physical anatomy, science and even curiosity.

What material is this statue made of? What were the characteristics or difficulties in creating this sculpture?

R. - I did it in clay, working the material that is that of creation. I had available the life-size sheets, negative and positive, of the Shroud which were very important. A man came out who really managed to amaze and was nothing but what was contained in the sacred cloth. A man one meter high and 79-80 cm tall, who weighed about 80 kg and with the mark of three nails that served to fix him to the cross. Two in the wrist-hand and a single nail for the feet.

This work has now been donated to the Pope. What was his journey?

R. - In 2000 this figure was presented in Bologna and traveled around the world. It has also been replicated on several continents. This is the original that we have kept for the last seven years in the Diocesan Museum of Imola and now with the Pope's blessing, let's say, he received an "imprimatur" not just.