

ONE PICTURE IS WORTH MORE THAN A THOUSAND TESTS

Fr PETER LITTLE, SJ, Sydney

The massive amount of enthralling information about the Shroud (conveyed so faithfully to us by our own Rex Morgan) risks obscuring a basic truth about it. While we cannot be grateful enough to Secondo Pia for discovering, - in 1898 - through the 'living' majesty of the Shroud face on his camera negative, that the Shroud itself is virtually a giant negative. Notice he didn't need-any scientific tests before knowing what, rather, who, he was looking at.

Many scholars, heads sunk in dusty documents, refused to look at Pia's photos. Photography was merely a new-fangled thing. Any evidence it uncovered couldn't possibly prevail against an array of documents that denied the genuineness of the Shroud. My archaeology professor in Rome remarked one day, á propos of the Shroud, that people obsessed with the worth of documents wouldn't accept somebody standing in front of them without documents proving him to be there.

Many scholars today, their learned heads sunk in books full of information on the Shroud from every kind of testing contemporary apparatus makes possible, tell us that we need more testing before we can decide it's genuine. The carbon-14 tests had media moguls informing their clientele of millions that the Shroud was at last proved not to be genuine.

But, here's my point. No tests are needed at all. Only one condition is needed for anybody looking at photographs of the Shroud to know immediately it's real.

The condition is almost universally fulfilled. Virtually everybody has seen one or more famous artistic depictions of the, face of Christ in his passion or resurrection. It's not only that the similarity between these hundred and one masterpieces and the facial image on the Shroud is enough for instant recognition. It's the living majesty of Christ the Lord in death that grips every onlooker. To link it with mere artistic masterpieces is unthinkable: the difference is unmistakable. Scientific tests simply don't deal with haunting majesty.

Maybe if the Shroud contained no image of the only crucified one the whole world knows about, carbon-14 tests might help us determine if it could have enfolded Christ the Lord. If there were no facial image with its awesome look of majesty and affronted dignity - tests might help pinpoint the cloth in time and place. But to think we need tests, and more and more of them, to

determine if the Shroud is contemporaneous with the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, when that crucifixion is placarded on it in front of our very eyes, is surely bizarre beyond belief. Next year's Turin's millions won't suffer from such a Nervous Nellie syndrome.

THE *SPUTNIK* OF THE SHROUD

On 13 July 1983 stalled from the far Australia a letter to me. It began: "Dear Professor Marinelli, I apologize for not having replied to your letter dated 28th January 1983 but I was abroad when it arrived. I have much pleasure in enclosing a copy of 'Perpetual Miracle' and also a full set of back issues of '*Shroud News*' up to the current No. 18". The letter ended: "Next time I am in Rome I hope we may be able to meet and discuss matters of common interest concerning the Holy Shroud. With all good wishes, Yours sincerely Rex Morgan MBE". This MBE for me was the abbreviation of a religious order, so I thought that Rex Morgan was a priest ... At that time, I could not imagine that my letter started a beautiful friendship with the *sputnik* of the Shroud, the only man in the world who visited (and many times!) all the Shroud Centres, Exhibitions, Associations and single scholars in existence all over the world.

The beginning for me was at the pages 114-115 of *Sindon* No. 31, December 1982. Sixteen lines signed Cesare Visconti presented *Shroud News* and immediately I decided to write to Rex Morgan. My English was (and still is) very poor, Australia was so far and nobody could imagine the coming of the fax age. My Shroudie friends made a fool of me, predicting no answer. "Never you will meet him, for what start a correspondence?", they said. "For the Shroud; to meet is not necessary", I answered.

The months of silence made me near to believe to my friends. But Morgan was a *sputnik*, and a *sputnik* answer when he can. In July the surprise; I was very proud waving the letter under the nose of my friends...

Fourteen year passed. Many letters, many faxes, many meetings, many pictures together (punctually published on *Shroud News*)... it's impossible to describe the cooperation between Rex and me.

I would like only to say what, in my opinion, is the difference between *Shroud News* and all the other magazines on the Shroud: *Shroud News* is lively. All the pictures, the comments, the description are lively, and one can imagine to be present at the events. All is transmitted by a lively *sputnik*. And really my hope is to write another page like this for the issue 200!!!

Happy birthday, *Shroud News*! And many, many thanks to his *sputnik* Rex!

Emanuela Marinelli