

The 2015 Exposition – A Personal Report

By **Barrie Schwartz**

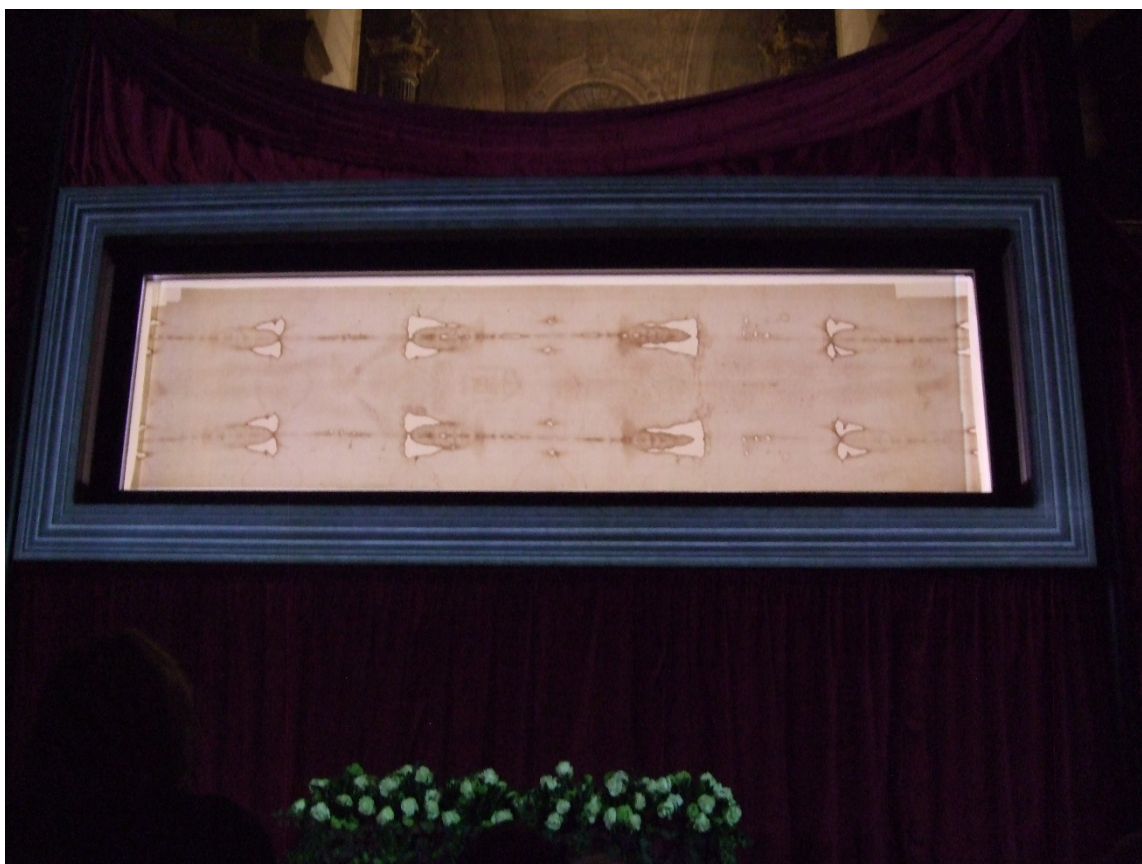
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My trip to this year's Shroud exposition in Turin was much shorter than any of my visits to previous exhibitions, resulting in a totally hectic, non-stop and completely full ten day agenda! I had scheduled meetings with many people in Turin and was also committed to spending time with two visiting American tour groups. I gave each group a private presentation, spent time answering their questions and went to view the Shroud with them. That also served as a fund raising event for STERA, Inc. However, I have to admit that being away from STERA, Inc. for any extended period of time has become a problem these days. I am still trying to get caught up as I write this several months later!

The best place to start is with the exhibition itself. One of the first major announcements from Turin was that a special new reliquary case would be used to display the Shroud. This high tech case was designed to protect the Shroud on many levels, including a controlled internal atmosphere and a special spectrum of lighting to enhance image contrast and preserve the cloth, and all behind nearly three inches of special bulletproof glass. The new cabinet was delivered to the Cathedral on March 5, 2015 (see photo below) but the Shroud was not moved into the case until April 18, 2015, just one day before the opening of the event. You can view a YouTube video of the Shroud being transferred into the new display case at this link: [Transfer of the Shroud](#). You can also read a brief article titled, [High Tech behind Shroud of Turin Exposition](#) with more details.



Photograph © renzobussio 2015 Sindone.org



The new display case and the improved lighting also provided some additional problems for visitors. The cathedral was kept quite dark, so the brightest object in the room was the Shroud itself, which was faintly illuminated by the light from two rather distant projectors. Although photography was technically prohibited, there was an unspoken understanding on the part of the Turin authorities that people would still be taking many photographs of the Shroud. Using flash was strictly forbidden (rightfully so) and the illumination on the Shroud itself was very low (only 20 lux), leading to rather long hand held exposures. With wide apertures and slow shutter speeds, focus becomes critical and camera movement becomes inevitable. The typical result was a slightly blurred, out of focus photograph. To complicate things even more, the camera/phone/tablet had to focus through several inches of dense bulletproof glass. Unfortunately, the infrared autofocus mechanism in most cameras focuses on the surface of the glass rather than on the Shroud several inches behind it, causing the results to be slightly out of focus.

I have noticed that since the 2002 restoration of the Shroud, the Turin authorities have had certain difficulties in adjusting the lighting to portray the Shroud in its natural color when on public display. That may be because a whiter sheet was sewn to the back of the Shroud during the 2002 intervention, thus lowering the *apparent* contrast of the image itself. I discussed this with Bruno Barberis while in Turin and he explained that this year, to help compensate for this lowered contrast, the organizers tested and calibrated the spectral characteristics of the lighting used to maximize visual contrast in the image. However, this required using a portion of the visible

spectrum that in part neutralized the yellow color of the cloth itself, making it appear more grayish in tone. To help restore the warm color appearance of the Shroud, the organizers chose to surround the cloth with a blue frame. Any art or photography student knows that doing so makes the object within the frame *appear* warmer in tone. There is no doubt that the Turin authorities approached this carefully and thoughtfully and made the best compromise possible between contrast and color, so that viewing the Shroud was a truly positive experience for everyone.

As I mentioned in the lead in to this article, security was at the highest level I have ever seen in the five public exhibitions I have attended since 1978. [Video surveillance cameras](#) with special software, [drones](#) and an overwhelming police presence were put in place to insure the safety of the pilgrims and the Shroud. In fact, you could not look in any direction without seeing city police, state police and even military personnel, all well-armed and obviously vigilant. All visitors also had to pass through metal detectors before entering the Cathedral. One can be certain that the security measures were even greater on the days that the Pope visited Turin (June 21st and 22nd). As far as I can tell, no serious security issues were encountered during the 67 day event.

As for the organization of the exhibition, it was top notch as usual. Thanks to the Online Reservation System provided by the Archdiocese of Turin where people could reserve the date and time of their visits, the waiting times to enter the cathedral were modest on most days. In fact, on the multiple mornings that I visited the exposition, the lines were almost non-existent, although the wait was usually longer later in the day and on weekends. Most of the queue path was covered by tents to shelter visitors in case of rain, so the weather was not an issue. For the elderly and the infirm or those that needed special assistance, volunteers with wheelchairs were available for the asking. In fact, the Turin authorities trained literally thousands of volunteers in the months leading up to the exposition, and without doubt, they helped create a very welcoming, well-organized environment for visitors. I am sure that seeing the Shroud during this exposition was a truly memorable experience for everyone who attended.

You can view an excellent photographic essay on the 2015 Exposition by my dear friend and “brother photographer” Aldo Guerreschi, which we first published on the website on May 6, 2015. It is titled, [Turin 2015 by Aldo Guerreschi](#) and includes some very beautiful images.

My trip to Italy actually began in Rome, where my dear friend Fr. Rafael Pascual, LC, Dean of the Science and Faith program at the Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum (Pontifical University) had invited me to return and give six lectures before flying up to Turin. Of course, I gratefully accepted so I could visit the university again and see many of my other good friends there, like Fr. Hector Guerra, LC, a former provincial of the order, who flew in from Madrid to meet with me and Maria Chiara Petrosillo, the niece of the late Vatican correspondent Orazio Petrosillo. I also got to spend time with my good friend Fr. Andrew Dalton, LC, who had been one of my best students at the university when I taught a course on the Shroud there several years ago (and who is now an international lecturer on the Shroud himself), as well as the many seminarians I had

gotten to know on those previous visits. It was fast paced and I didn't get much sleep, but I had a wonderful time!

This also afforded me the opportunity to meet with several other important Shroud scholars and close friends that live in or near Rome, like Emanuela, Maurizio and Simona Marinelli, who came to visit me at the university and Paolo Di Lazzaro, physicist, colleague and dear friend, who I had dinner with on the night of my arrival in Rome. The next morning I had breakfast with Rafael de la Piedra of Peru, who recently helped establish a new Shroud organization, the [Centro Panamericano de Sindonología \(CPS\)](#), which focuses on bringing Spanish language Shroud information to South and Central America. That evening, after my final three lectures, I had my farewell dinner with Fr. Pascual and Fr. Guerra at the seminary and it was off to the airport in the morning to catch my flight to Turin.

Well, the best laid plans can easily be upset when one has to deal with airports and airlines! After waiting in a long queue for more than an hour to check in for my noon flight to Turin, I was promptly informed when I reached the counter that the flight had been cancelled! There had been a serious fire at the Rome airport which had caused many flights to be cancelled or postponed. They kindly rebooked me on the next flight out, which was scheduled to depart around 9:00 pm that evening and they assured me it would not be cancelled. To make matters even worse, all the airport lounges were also closed so I had to sit for nearly 12 hours in the rather uncomfortable airport waiting area. I finally was able to check in for my one hour flight to Turin around 7:00pm that evening, but was immediately informed that it was delayed. The flight finally departed at around 11:00 that Saturday evening and I arrived in Turin well past midnight. After a brief taxi ride to the hotel, I was finally able to take a shower and get some sleep.

My first meeting was scheduled for noon the next day (Sunday), with well-known Shroud scholar Giulio Fanti. We met at the hotel for an hour or so and then walked up the block to have lunch at a nearby restaurant. Giulio had to leave to catch his train back to Padua and I went back to the hotel to try and answer some of the many e-mails that had piled up over the past few days.



Dinner with Giovanni Gonella and Aldo Guerreschi and their families (Courtesy Aldo Guerreschi)

I had arranged to have dinner that evening with my “brother photographer” Aldo Guerreschi, his wife Nella, their daughter Paola and her husband and their two children (Aldo’s grandchildren). I also called and invited my friend Giovanni Gonella and his family to join us. He is the eldest son of Prof. Luigi Gonella, who had been the Archbishop’s Scientific Advisor during STURP’s 1978 examination of the Shroud. Giovanni, his wife and young son met us at my hotel and we all walked en masse to a nearby pizzeria for a truly enjoyable dinner. Needless to say, we had a wonderful time together but the evening went too quickly! Five long years had passed since we were last together (during the 2010 Shroud exhibition). Although our meetings may be infrequent, our friendship is everlasting. And that brought my first full day in Turin to an end. I still had one more day reserved for meetings before my first tour group was scheduled to arrive. (Photograph courtesy Aldo Guerreschi).

The next morning, I arrived at the world famous Sindone Museo (Shroud Museum) for my 10:00am appointment with Bruno Barberis, President of the International Center for Sindonology and Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti, retired President of the Diocesan Commission on the Shroud. Not only had they invited me for the meeting, but also recommended me to be interviewed by a television production company from Hong Kong that was shooting at the museum that day. Their organization produces Christian programs that are shown in Mainland China. But first, the three of us had a very fruitful meeting that lasted about an hour before we walked over to the adjacent chapel to meet with Professor Gian Maria Zaccone, the Director of the Shroud Museum, who was about to be interviewed himself. I had time for a short but excellent meeting with Prof. Zaccone and believe our meetings that day marked a milestone in STERA’s relationship with Turin.



Prof. Zaccone being interviewed in the Chapel

After the crew finished shooting Prof. Zaccone’s interview, it was my turn. They brought me into the museum itself and placed me in front of Secondo Pia’s massive camera that made the first photograph of the Shroud. The interview went smoothly and when I was finished, I went to say goodbye to Bruno, who informed me that Msgr. Ghiberti had invited me to lunch with him that coming Wednesday. I quickly agreed, said my goodbyes and took a taxi back to the hotel. It was time to get back to the ever growing pile of e-mails that were filling my mailbox.



Photo courtesy Aldo Guerreschi

The next day, the first of the American tour groups arrived at the hotel and I was there to meet with them personally. Late that afternoon I made my first presentation to their group and then had dinner with them in the hotel. Among the guests who came to hear my presentation that day was my good friend Paolo Tealdi, who I had first met in Turin in 2010. He brought his entire family with him, along with a special guest, Professor Giovanni Imbalzano, a noted Italian Shroud scholar, giving us the opportunity to meet in person for the first time. (You can find many references to his work by using the Website Search Engine on Shroud.com). Of course, also attending was my dear friend and “brother photographer” Aldo Guerreschi and his ever present camera.

The next day I met with Bruno and Msgr. Ghiberti for a wonderful lunch at the monsignor’s favorite restaurant and afterwards, we said our last goodbyes. Bruno was leaving the next morning for a series of lectures and monsignor was very busy with the exposition.



Msgr. Ghiberti, Barrie Schwartz and Bruno Barberis

Later that afternoon I met with Ann Schneible of the Catholic News Agency in Rome, who had come up to Turin by train to conduct an interview with me. We spent a few hours talking together and the resulting article was published on August 4, 2015 and was titled, [How One Skeptical Scientist came to believe the Shroud of Turin](#). Of course, it immediately generated something of a buzz on the blogs because the author referred to me as a “scientist.” As everyone knows, that’s not something I’ve ever claimed (I am just a photographer), but that was how Ann described me. I don’t believe she intended for anyone to take it that literally, but in the Shroud world there is always someone willing to find fault, even on such a minor issue as this. After a while, you just get used to it. That evening I had dinner with and gave my final presentation to the second American tour group, who were leaving early the next morning for their next destination city.

The following day would be a bit easier. At 3:00 pm I was picked up by one of the local Turin television channels and taken back to the Shroud Museum, where once again I was placed in front of Secondo Pia’s camera and briefly interviewed. Then it was back to the hotel to meet with Louise Cowley, a freelance British writer that had flown in from the UK to interview me. We spent several hours talking and then walked over to the pizzeria (where I had dinner with the Guerreschi and the Gonella families) and had another great meal, my last one in Italy. Early the next morning I took a taxi to the Turin airport and started my uneventful journey home.

I want to extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to all of the wonderful people I met with on this trip that made it another truly memorable event for me. To my friends and colleagues in Rome and Turin, to all the media representatives I met with, to the great folks on the two pilgrimage groups I spent time with, thank you all from the bottom of my heart! You were truly wonderful and made this trip another great event in my life!

Barrie Schwartz - August 6, 2015