

# **Lectures in Spain, Italy and Poland - April 2011**

## **A Personal Report by Barrie Schwartz**

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In 2010, at the end of the public exhibition of the Shroud and while I was still in Europe, I was invited to give a lecture to the students and seminarians at the University of Rome (Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum), a public university operated by the Legionaries of Christ and one of the seventeen universities they operate around the world. The presentation was a great success and was very well received by the attendees, so I was invited back this year to actually teach a course to the students specifically about the 1978 STURP team and its scientific examination of the Shroud.

### **SPAIN**

At the kind invitation of my friend Fr. Hector Guerra, L.C., I was asked to first come to Spain to lecture at the University Francisco de Vitoria, a public university in Madrid (also operated by the Legionaries), before going to Rome to teach the course. I was thrilled at the opportunity since there is a large and active Shroud research community in Spain, most notably the Centro Español de Sindonologia (C.E.S.) with such esteemed members as Jorge Manuel Rodriguez, Mark Guscini, Fr. Manny Carreira, S.J., Cesar Barta, Alfonso Muñoz-Cobo and many more. Their research on the Shroud and the Sudarium of Oviedo is highly respected and known worldwide. And of course, they are all my friends, so I looked forward to the possibility that some of them might come to Madrid for one of my lectures and we could have a little reunion.

On April 1, 2011, I met with Fr. Guerra at the university, had a quick lunch, gave a brief interview to a television news crew and made my first presentation to a very attentive and mostly student audience at high noon. Then, Fr. Guerra and two seminarians whisked me into a car and we started a four hour road trip to Salamanca, north of Madrid. Salamanca is the site of the Legionaries novitiate and school where young seminarians typically spend several years before moving to their next assignments.

As this was my first time in Spain, I welcomed the opportunity to ride through the beautiful Spanish countryside and watch an ever-changing vista of history passing by the window. That was interrupted at one point when Fr. Guerra's mobile phone rang and a Spanish reporter asked to conduct an interview with me, which lasted about 15 minutes.

As we drove towards Salamanca, we came to the historic town of Avila, famous for its magnificent, perfectly preserved, medieval walled city and the site where St. Theresa founded the Carmelite order. As a professional photographer, it was all I could do to contain myself as we stood before some of the most beautiful and magnificent historic architecture I had ever seen.



**The Medieval Walled City of Avila**

That night, I stayed at the school and made my presentation the next morning, April 2, 2011, to the 150 students in attendance. As one would expect, they were a very enthusiastic and attentive group and asked some really excellent questions. In fact, the Q and A would have gone on for much longer, but once again Fr. Guerra whisked me away by car, as we had to return to Madrid for my 6:00pm lecture back at the university. That was the “main” academic lecture I was to give and I was happy to hear that some of the C.E.S. members were definitely planning to attend.

That evening, back at the university, the hall filled rapidly and was nearly full by the time we were scheduled to begin. Many of the attendees came up to speak with me before we started and one was a priest who I didn’t recognize, but who spoke more like a scientist than a theologian. We briefly discussed some Shroud issues and I was amazed and pleased at his extensive scientific knowledge of the Shroud. He mentioned his name but in the noise of the nearly full auditorium, I did not really hear him. Since I was about to begin, I had to cut our conversation short, but not before he handed me an envelope with a paper he had written about the Shroud inside it. It wasn’t until many hours later, in the quiet of my hotel room that night, that I opened the envelope, pulled out the paper and noticed the business card attached to it, with the name Manuel M. Carreira, S.J.

It was only then that I realized that this was THE Fr. Manny Carreira, member of the C.E.S., member of the online Shroud Science Group and a highly respected physicist and sindonologist. I was embarrassed because I didn’t recognize him immediately, although fortunately, there was no one there to see my very red face. No wonder his point of view was scientific! He was a scientist himself. Fortunately, he is also a priest and was kind enough to promptly forgive me when I wrote him afterwards and apologized for my lack of recognition! I also found his paper fascinating, with the first part being a detailed overview and evaluation of the current state of

Shroud science, but the second part being far more theological in nature. In fact, I submitted the paper to STERA, Inc.'s Editorial Review Committee which reviews and approves any new papers added to the site and his paper can now be found on the [Religion and Philosophy](#) page.



**Fr. Hector Guerra, Barrie Schwartz and interpreter Beth Parsons at the University Francisco de Vitoria  
April 2, 2011, Madrid, Spain - Photograph ©2011 César Barta**

I began my lecture to the nearly full auditorium and after a few minutes, noticed my old friend Jorge Manuel Rodriguez, current President of the C.E.S., arriving and taking his seat. I had not seen him in over ten years (and he hasn't aged a bit) so I actually stopped in mid lecture to say hello and welcome him! I hope I didn't embarrass him, as he had gotten caught in some evening traffic and arrived a few minutes late. The lecture that night went very well and the audience response was wonderful. I felt very welcomed by everyone and look forward to future visits to Spain and all the friends I have there. I also want to extend a special word of thanks to Beth Parsons, a professional interpreter who served as my second voice that evening. I couldn't have done it without her!

## ITALY

The next day it was off to the Madrid airport and on to Rome. Fr. Guerra had other obligations so would not be traveling with me as we did last year, nor would he be in Rome while I taught the course that week. Of course, last year I had met Fr. P. Rafael Pascual, L.C., Dean of the Science and Faith program in which I would be lecturing and had corresponded with him on numerous occasions during the time I was developing the course. He proved to be a warm, gracious and generous host and made me feel very welcome upon my arrival.



**The beautiful atrium of the Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum**

The university itself sits in a beautiful setting in the foothills near Rome. It is housed in a modern building that features a central atrium three stories high with classrooms and lecture halls in each

of the four wings leading from the atrium itself. It is a truly wonderful environment for the students (and the visiting lecturers) and provides an atmosphere very conducive to learning.

Since I could only stay in Rome for a week, the course had to be concentrated into a very short timeframe and presented in a series of twelve 45 minute lectures. Students who completed the course successfully would be granted a Specialization Diploma on Shroud of Turin Studies in the Science and Faith Institute of the university. The first lectures were scheduled for Monday, April 4, 2011, and I was to deliver three lectures per day. The school was closed on Tuesday so my remaining nine lectures were presented on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of that week. That made it difficult for many students to attend all the lectures due to their other course obligations, so the university arranged to have all my lectures professionally videotaped so that students who could not attend could ultimately see the lectures on DVD.

The course itself consisted of twelve PowerPoint presentations that provided visual support for the lectures. The basis for the course was the original test plan developed by the STURP team before they went to Turin in 1978. It was titled, "Operations Test Plan for Investigating the Shroud of Turin by Electromagnetic Radiation at Various Wavelengths" and is one of the more rare documents in the Shroud world, as one copy was given to each STURP team member and no other copies were ever distributed publicly. The test plan, which was used by each member of the team during the examination of the Shroud in 1978, also served as the "textbook" for the course and a pdf version of the entire document was provided to each student on CD-ROM disc. The disc also included each of the twelve PowerPoint presentations, along with all twenty of STURP's peer reviewed papers in pdf format.

The objective of the course was to provide students with a clear overview of the STURP team and its members, the team's genesis and history, the in-depth level of their advance preparation, their actual examination of the cloth and the resulting scientific papers that were generated from their work and published in refereed scientific journals afterwards.

Since I was teaching the course in the Science and Faith program of the university, and since I was obligated to create some form of final exam for the students, I decided to create an essay question that would fulfill the school's requirements but would satisfy my own curiosity as well. As a Jewish man teaching a course at a Catholic university about the science of the Shroud of Turin to students, some of whom are destined to become future priests, I was curious what impact this might have on their perception of faith in general and posed the following question for the final exam: "What is the importance of science to faith?"

The responses were thoughtful and generally well written so I submitted three of the essays to STERA, Inc.'s Editorial Review Committee for inclusion on the website. I must admit that I was

somewhat surprised to see the debate these essays created within the committee itself. Of course, I have learned over the years that theological questions can often create more debate and disagreement than scientific ones! In the end, after taking into account the recommendations of the committee and making some modest changes to each paper to accommodate those recommendations, they were all accepted for publication on the website. Obviously, since the question dealt with faith, the three papers are included on the [Religion and Philosophy](#) section of the site and I have clearly indicated that these are student papers. In the end, I was very pleased with the attentiveness, questions and responses of the students during the course and their serious attempts to answer a rather deep and complex question afterwards.

Since I knew in advance that the university would be closed on Tuesday of that week, I accepted an invitation from an old friend, Dr. Elizabeth Lisot, a professor of fine arts at the University of Dallas in Rome, to come to their campus near Castel Gandolfo (the Pope's summer home) and give a Shroud lecture to their students. The University of Dallas has their fine arts program located on a beautiful campus on the outskirts of Rome so the students are able to study the arts "on location" in the heart of Italy.

I was very impressed with the large turnout and the warm response I was given by the students and faculty of the school. I was even happier that I did not need an interpreter for the lecture, since all of the students in attendance were American! Judging from the Q and A that followed, the students were very interested in the Shroud and I have been invited back to the school to give additional lectures in the future.

Over the next three days I finished my lectures at the Apostolorum and said goodbye to my friends there. With my other obligations fulfilled, I spent my last evening in Rome at the home of my good friends Francesca Saracino and Paolo Monaci, the director and producer respectively of a new Shroud documentary soon to be released called the "Night of the Shroud." Francesca has been working on the program for more than two years and I had participated in the production by shooting several of the interviews for the program with researchers here in America, including John and Rebecca Jackson, Robert Villarreal and myself. Interestingly, the on-camera host of the program is Italian actress Rosalinda Celentano, best known in America for her portrayal of the Devil in Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ."

The program has gone through a number of changes and revisions over the last year due to some new information that came to light regarding the radiocarbon dating of the Shroud. In fact, Francesca felt the new information was so essential for inclusion in the program that she had to shoot additional interviews and re-edit the program. That evening, Francesca had her cameraman come to their flat and reshoot portions of my interview as well.

I was then shown a “rough cut” of the program, which was primarily in Italian and very well done. I strongly urged her to have her distributor, RAI Italian television, dub the entire program into English for release in the U.S. (many of the interviews are already in English anyway). The information presented is really too complex and important for sub-titles (which many viewers don’t like) and she promised to pass my recommendation on to RAI. After a great home cooked meal prepared for me by Paolo and Francesca, I spent my last night in Rome at their house.

## POLAND

On Saturday, April 9, 2011, I boarded a plane for Warsaw, Poland, the next stop on my agenda. I was going to meet my dear friend, John Roth, former member of the Board of Governors of the Legatus organization here in America, and the person who had organized this part of my trip. John is a two star U.S. Army general who worked at the Pentagon at the time of his retirement. I first met him when he served as the organizer of the 2008 Legatus Winter Summit that was held in Naples, Florida. For those not familiar with it, Legatus is a Catholic businessmen’s organization founded by Tom Monahan, former CEO and owner of the Domino’s Pizza chain. There are now Legatus chapters in most major cities of the U.S. and I have lectured at many of them. Consequently, in late 2007 John contacted me to speak at their upcoming national event but added one stipulation: I first had to come to Savannah, Georgia, where he resides, and make a Shroud presentation to his parish. Naturally, I agreed and stayed with him and his lovely wife Nancy at their beautiful home.

We then drove to Naples from Savannah, a nine hour drive, where we had plenty of time to discuss the Shroud and other matters and really get to know one another. Now I have to admit that although I spent four years in the U.S. Navy (1965-1969), I was but a humble enlisted man and didn’t spend much time with high ranking flag officers (like generals or admirals). Consequently, I had a hard time calling him “John” and continued to call him “sir” even while I was a guest in his home. He finally chastised me for my formality and reminded me that neither of us was in the military anymore!

John and I became good friends and stayed in contact with each other over the years. Both of us were somewhat amazed that a retired general and an old hippy photographer could connect with each other on such a personal level and become close friends. We both even mentioned that fact in our jointly presented lectures.

John had recently formed the first Legatus chapter in Warsaw and invited me to come to Poland and travel to five different cities with him and jointly give lectures at various schools to students aged 13 to 19. I would present the science of the Shroud and then John would speak about its relationship to faith. Upon my arrival in Warsaw, John picked me up accompanied by the



primary Polish organizer of our trip, Michal Kamiński. Michal, his beautiful wife Monika and their children Aniela and Gabriel would act as our hosts while we were in the Warsaw area and John and his wife Nancy and I stayed as guests in their home.

Michal also volunteered to be our driver and would do so for the next 10 days as we traveled by car from Warsaw to Poznan to Lodz to Czestochowa and finally, to Krakow. With us for most of the trip was Miroslaw Gońda, a professional interpreter who served as our official translator and became a great friend (I just called him Mirek). It is interesting to note that the Polish language has many more tenses than English, so it took many more words from Mirek to translate our presentations than it took for us to say them! That means, given a one hour time limit for each lecture, John and I spoke for about 25 minutes of each hour and Mirek the rest.

Traveling through Poland was an amazing experience for me. Not only because it was the first time I had visited a country in Eastern Europe, but more so because both my mother and father were born in Poland. So in many ways, this part of the journey was bringing me in touch with my own family roots. In fact, I'll write a little more about that later in this article.

Michal had planned our itinerary and arranged for us to stay overnight at nearby convents, seminaries or at some of the schools themselves as we traveled along our route. We were received as honored guests at every stop and I was deeply moved at the wonderful treatment I personally received because of my involvement with the Shroud and my Polish roots.



**Barrie Schwartz lecturing in Piekary, Poland - ©2011 Fr. Jacek Tendej**



At each school, I would speak first and then John would speak, before returning the podium to me where I shared my own personal perspective on the Shroud and what it has meant in my life. We were warmly welcomed at each school and we owe a debt of gratitude to the directors, teachers and students of every school we attended, but perhaps the most memorable was the last school we spoke at in Piekary, a rural area outside of Krakow.

We were fortunate to spend two nights on campus and lectured to over 400 students at the Liceum Ogólnokształcące w Centrum Edukacyjnym “Radosna Nowina 2000.” The extra time on their campus gave us a great opportunity to speak with the students directly and get to know them better and of course, hear their thoughts and ideas. By then, Mirek, our original interpreter had left us and Michal was planning on acting as the interpreter for that final presentation. However, the students immediately protested our use of a translator and requested that we speak in English! Of course, John and I were thrilled, because it gave us both more time to make our presentations (but I think Michal was the happiest of all because he is not that confident about his English). It was obvious that the students enjoyed our program and their enthusiasm was truly overwhelming. I want to extend my sincerest thanks to Fr. Jacek Tendej, the Director of the school, for his kindness, hospitality and friendship and to the faculty, staff and students themselves for their truly generous and wonderful reception.

Overall, this was the longest and most satisfying trip I have made to Europe since we examined the Shroud in Turin in 1978. I was particularly honored to represent STERA, Inc., and as such, help further STERA’s goals of educating the most diverse and broadest number of people about the Shroud of Turin. But, as I mentioned earlier, there was also a very personal side to this trip.

### **EPILOGUE**

This epilogue is really not about the Shroud or the lectures we gave in Poland, so feel free to stop reading this right here and now if you’ve had enough. After all, this is page nine already! But if you are still with me, I would like to share a far more personal part of the story with you and explain why the trip to Poland was so important to me. Of course, it was only because of the Shroud of Turin that this trip even took place, so it may still have some relevance in the end. I’ll let you decide.

My mother was born in 1923 in a little village named Wisznice, about 30 kilometers from what is now the Belarus border in eastern Poland. The family immigrated to America in 1930 when she was age 7 and the youngest of four children. It also happened to be the midst of the Great Depression. When I was growing up in the 1950’s and 1960’s, my maternal grandparents lived with us in what I can only describe as our own little version of Fiddler on the Roof! At every family gathering there was constant talk about the “old country” and the village in Poland where

they had all lived. Of course, no one ever talked about going back for a visit, since the loss of many relatives during the war had left too many scars and bad memories and made the idea of returning unthinkable to them.

I am very fortunate, for my mother is still with us, is now 88 years old and is in great health thanks to the great care and watchful eye provided by my younger brother. So needless to say, she was very excited at the idea of my going to Poland. Sadly, she is the last of the generation of our family that immigrated to America and my last living connection to my roots. In the months leading up to the trip, we had long phone conversations about the old days and the “old country” and she tried to recall as many details about the village as she could. I found it somewhat ironic that my Jewish mother’s clearest and most vivid memory of the village was of the “little white Catholic church near the river!” It was the one landmark that she remembered most clearly from when she was a little girl there 81 years ago!

John Roth, Michal and I left Krakow the next morning and started our five hour drive to Wisznice, my mother’s village. Michal had graciously included the visit in our itinerary and saved it for our last day on the road and our return trip to Warsaw, so we wouldn’t be pressured by time. Over the past ten days we had spent many hours talking in the car as we traveled between cities and I had shared my excitement with them about visiting the village. In fact, by the time we arrived in Wisznice, I believe John and Michal were at least as excited as I was! As we approached the village, we stopped at the first road sign that bore the village name. I jumped out of the car, handed my camera to John and he gleefully took a photo of me to “prove” I was really there!

Since our best clue about the village was “the little white Catholic church near the river,” we drove down the main street of Wisznice looking for a Catholic church. It only took a few minutes before we came across a large one (this is Poland, after all) and we decided to stop in and speak to the priest. I felt that if anyone would know about the little old church, he would.

After about ten minutes, the priest, Fr. Sławomir Olopiak, ushered us into his office and Michal began to explain to him in Polish who we were and why we were there. He included the fact that I was Jewish and that my mother was born in Wisznice and that I had photographed the Shroud of Turin as part of STURP in 1978 and was in Poland lecturing on the subject. I am not exactly sure what else Michal told him, but his eyes grew wider and he turned to me and asked in broken English, “Do you think it is real?”

I smiled and gave him my usual response to that question: “Of course I do. I wouldn’t have spent 33 years of my life studying it if I thought it was a fake.” He smiled and seemed satisfied with the answer.

Frankly, I was really less interested in talking about the Shroud at that moment than I was in asking him about the little white church. Michal then started to translate for me as I asked first, “was there an older, little white church in the village?” The answer was an immediate, “Yes.”

Is it still in existence?

The answer was again, “Yes.” He then added that it had been recently restored and was now being used as the village museum!

Is it near the river?

The answer was, “Yes. It is right next to the river.”

Is it far?

The answer was. “No.” In fact, he said he would get his coat immediately and take us over to the museum himself.



**The Little White Church Near the River - Fr. Slawomir Olopiak at left unlocks the museum as Michal Kamiński and John Roth pose at right**

I got more excited with each answer and we were all sort of dancing around Fr. Olopiak's office as we realized we were in the right place and about to see the embodiment of my mother's memories! Fr. Olopiak joined us in Michal's car and we drove the two blocks to the little white church together. I again jumped out of the car, camera in hand, and immediately started making photographs of the beautiful old building. (After all, I am a professional photographer). I then took out my mobile phone and called my mother in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

"Guess where I am standing?" I asked.

"In Poland!" she replied

I laughed out loud and told her I was standing in front of the little white church near the river. She was absolutely thrilled but then, without missing a beat, immediately reminded me to take some photographs! I laughed even harder and savored the joys of having a Jewish mother! It was truly a wonderful moment as I stood in the heart of my ancestral home town in what was surely the absolute highlight of my visit to Poland.

### **EPILOGUE TO THE EPILOGUE**

Of course, that is not the end of the story. Fr. Olopiak began referring to me as "a Jewish son of Wisznice" and suggested we plan a future trip where he would assemble the entire village in the larger church and where I, a Jewish son of the village, could give them a presentation on the Shroud of Turin! I think the irony appealed to him.

He then gave me a book that was written (in Polish) about Wisznice after the war. Someone had taken the time to collect many old photographs of the village and incorporate them into the book, which detailed the history of the village going back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Sadly, there are no longer any Jews living in the village and very few have ever come back to visit, so Fr. Olopiak was just as excited as I was about my being there. Naturally, upon my return to America I sent the book off to my mother so she could read about the village of her birth. As I told the Polish students in my lectures, I was born in America but I have pure Polish blood running through my veins. This visit was a wonderful opportunity that allowed me to connect with my own roots for the first time in my life.

As a final note, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my dear friend General John Roth and the Legatus Poland organization and to Michal and Monika Kamiński and their family for co-sponsoring the trip and for organizing everything and then sharing their home with us. They are truly like family to me and I will forever be grateful for their sincere kindness and hospitality. As they say in Polish, *jenkuye!* (Thank you)! - Barrie Schwartz, July 17, 2011