

## **2<sup>nd</sup> International Congress on the Holy Shroud- Lima, Peru**

**By Rafael de la Piedra**

From 31st August to 3rd September 2010; the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Congress on the Holy Shroud was held in the city of Lima, Peru.

The event was organized by the Center for Catholic Studies (Centro de Estudios Católicos-CEC) and AcciónUniversitaria with the sponsorship of the Archbishop of Lima.

The ZUM auditorium of the University of Lima hosted more than 2,500 participants including students, teachers, religious, seminarians, priests and the general public.

A thematic exhibit that gathers the scientific and historic investigations about the possibly most studied relic in history was inaugurated on Tuesday, August 31<sup>st</sup> prior to the start of the congress in block "W" of the same university.

### **Blessing and Inauguration**

The opening ceremony was attended by Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne, Archbishop of Lima and Primate of Peru, who after blessing the showroom and different areas which host the congress, joined a short guided tour by the organizers.

Right after the congress was officially inaugurated in the ZUM auditorium of the university, the Cardinal, in his words, encouraged the audience to reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus in the Cross, fruit of love for us: "Those images and those data tell us about love and pain. Because the great suffering that is left in his mark in that Shroud is all fruit of Love".

"Everything that helps us to know better the reality of that cloth, of that blood, of those measures, of those antiquities is very close to historical, biological and chemical sciences. May these have an enormous weight in the technological and scientific development of these times", he continued.

The Archbishop of Lima also invited all the participants of the international congress to go beyond of what is scientific in relation to the significance of the Holy Shroud, deepening in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ.

"May in the soul of each act of salvation of Christ do its task. May we be a little better at the same time we acquire more (major) knowledge on this fact of the Holy Shroud", he exhorted.

He also regretted that at the present times people are living a deification of the material and a spiritual impoverishment and therefore he encouraged them that this exhibition may become a beginning for all of us to reflect on how transcendent is the love of Jesus for us, as he died on the cross.

Finally, he invited all the faithful to remember, with the suffering of Jesus on the Cross, his mother, the Virgin Mary: "It is very great to unite the saving mystery of Christ to his Mother. The Mother is alive, while the Son lies in the Shroud. On Mary, I want to talk in a symbolic way: Mary is the Holy Shroud. Because in her motherhood and in her pain/grief, she received the body of her Son and left the mark of love and pain of his Son in the heart of Mary."

## **Congress**

Dr. Bruno Barberis, associate professor of mathematical physics of the Science Faculty of the University of Turin and Director of International Centre of Sindonology in Turin since 2002 where the mantle lies, led the group of experts who during the days of the congress defended the authenticity of the relic from rigorous studies.

Barberis, who was in charge of the latest exhibition of the Holy Shroud on May this year, explained to the public the details of the event which was visited by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, and likewise presented in detail the restoration and conservation system which is currently used to safeguard the Holy Shroud from all elements that could affect it.

In his talk, he said that today, various researchers around the world confirm more and more with evidence the authenticity of the Holy Shroud. In this regard, he mentioned that the studies conducted by experts from the International Centre of Sindonology in Turin specify that there exist only one possibility in two hundred billion that the human body that was covered by the Shroud may be other than of Jesus.

“All we need to resolve is how the image of Jesus Christ was formed in the linen cloth, if we consider that the signs are not blood, but of discoloration of the cloth as product of natural oxidation”, he said and clarified that the features imprinted in the linen could not be generated by the human remains because the was wrapped (with the linen) for no longer than 36 hours. “We do not know if it was a physical, chemical or other form of process. We have to resolve this doubt.”

Furthermore, he considered that the carbón-14 analysis to determine the age of the mantle on 1988, which resulted that the piece dated from a period between 1260 and 1390 presents a series of irregularities since the burn that the Holy Shroud suffered from a fire on 1534 could alter its composition and rejuvenate the tissues: “The sample was drawn from an edge highly contaminated with cotton, water during the last fire, etc. In addition, this part was not the most significant from the entire mantle. Samples from other parts have to be taken”.

In another conference, Fr. Manuel Carreira, SJ, PhD in Physics and relic studies, explained the theories that currently manages about the formation of the image and that is directly associated to the theme of the resurrection, trying to reconcile the scientific evidence with the theological knowledge on the phenomenon of the resurrection.

Researcher of the Shroud and Peruvian theologian Rafael de la Piedra also explained the theological approach of the current Pope on the mantle of Turin, especially as “icon of Holy Saturday”.

The diverse theories around the historical path of the relic that has accompanied the aforementioned investigations as documentations were explained by D. Erwin Scheuch Pool.

## **Religious and Students**

Aside from the congress, there was a special recollection for more than 500 religious participants led by Prof. Barberis. In the morning, in three different dates, diverse groups of students received a general presentation of the theme and studies about the Shroud by Lic. Federico Gomez. There were approximately 1500 students from about 18 schools.