

## FURTHER TESTS TO BE ALLOWED ON THE SHROUD

On Saturday August 18 Vatican press spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls caused a major flutter among Shroud groups throughout the world with the unexpected announcement that further tests would be allowed on the Shroud. Remarking that the dating of the Shroud to the Middle Ages was "in contrast to preceding results ... which put it at a date of 2,000 years ago", and that "the way the image was formed remains quite mysterious", Navarro promised "In the future, as in the past, the Church will take into consideration all serious and competent operative proposals" for tests on the shroud. Navarro said the Church would attach no conditions to any new tests, other than that they would not damage the Shroud. Navarro also announced that the new archbishop of Turin, Giovanni Saldarini, would now officially take over as custodian of the Shroud, in succession to his predecessor as archbishop, Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero, who retired last year.

The surprise announcement has inevitably caused speculation regarding whatever or whoever has sparked it off. The most likely explanation seems to have been the publication of an important new Shroud book in Italy, *La Sindone, Un Enigma alla prova della Scienze*, coauthored by Dr. Orazio Petrosillo and Professor Emanuela Marinelli, published earlier this year by Rizzoli Libri of Milan. Dr. Petrosillo, one of Italy's most distinguished journalists, is Vatican correspondent of the leading Italian newspaper *Il Messaggero*. Professor Emanuela Marinelli is one of the founder members of the Shroud group Collegamento pro Sindone of Rome. Their book which is in hardback, and extremely well produced, with 259 pages of text and 16 pages of illustrations, is currently the most up-to-date and authoritative on the Shroud in the wake of the carbon dating. It carefully offsets the more generally acknowledged deficiencies of the carbon dating work on the Shroud against some of the compelling historical evidence in favour of the cloth's genuine antiquity. A measure of its importance is the fact that shortly after its publication Marinelli and Petrosillo were accorded a twenty minute audience with Pope John Paul II, from which it can at the very least be inferred that the carbon dating result has by no means dampened the Pope's interest in the Shroud.