

News from Italy

As stated in the Editorial, an excellent electronic newsletter by the Diocesan Committee for the Shroud has started circulating the world of Internet. Among other details, Cardinal Poletto has acknowledged the receipt of various scientific proposals for further Shroud studies, and states that they are being evaluated by a group of experts. No estimate is given for when any decision might be reached.

The Shroud Museum in Turin is now refurbished and open again to the public. Attendance to the Museum continues to be very satisfactory, considering its extreme specialisation. There is an average of 600 visitors a month, with a high point of 1100. The greatest part of these are not Turinese; many come from the world's most diverse countries: from the United States to Japan, from England to Uganda and from Saudi Arabia to Brazil.

On Saturday, 7 December 2002, the annual meeting of Shroud volunteers was held in the Valdoco Theater. The principal theme for the morning session was the conservation operation carried out on the Shroud between 20 June and 23 July, 2002. After having informed the scientific community and public opinion in September, the Diocesan Commission wanted to offer the same detailed information to those who had dedicated a considerable part of their time accompanying pilgrims during the Exhibitions of 1998 and 2000. The Vice-mayor, Dr. Marco Calgaro, presented a medal to Dr. Mechthild Flury-Lemberg in acknowledgment and gratitude of the City of Turin for the long work she carried out during the past ten years. Mme. Flury-Lemberg was deeply moved, answering that it had been a marvellous experience of team work, and for herself the work for the Shroud was the crowning of her career.

The newsletter has a little section in which people who have seen the Shroud can record in one or two sentences their own personal feelings about the visit. I was particularly struck by one reaction, especially relevant given the happenings in the Middle East over the last few months: "May the serenity of this face give peace to all people!" (by a visitor from Lebanon).

Finally, in the latest edition of this interesting newsletter, there is a message from Prince Vittorio Emanuele:

The year 2003 is a rich and important one for our family. Not only for contemporary events, with our return to our homeland after many years of longing, but also for the memories that it holds in relation to Savoy history.

Among these, certainly the most moving is the 550th anniversary since the revered Shroud of Turin entered the history of our family and of Piedmont. I am very grateful to the Confraternity of the Most Holy Shroud, to the International Center of Sindonology, and to the Shroud Museum to have highlighted this anniversary.

For 530 years the Holy Shroud has been in our family, that has lavished on it devotion, affection and protection. It has always been an important reference point for the Savoy Family, on both personal and institutional levels. From the Blessed Amadeo IX - often represented venerating the Sacred Linen - to Carlo Felice, from Vittorio Amedeo II to my August Father who, even from afar was always attentive and felt a part of whatever happened concerning the Holy Shroud - so much so that he wished to leave it, just twenty years ago, to the Pope with a generous and far-seeing gesture - a continuous history of devotion and deep respect for what has been the "Relic " of our Family and of the

Savoyard State on this side and on the other side of the mountains.

This devotion continues today unchanged, and its concrete sign is the admission of my son, the Prince of Piedmont and Venezia, Emanuele Filiberto, to the Brothers of the Confraternity of the Holy Shroud.

Therefore, I reiterate my appreciation for this project, looking forward to kneeling, together with my family, before the casket of the Sacred Linen as my August Ancestors always did.

Geneva, 18 March 2003

20th anniversary of the demise of H.M. King Umberto II

Congratulations to all involved in the production of this electronic newsletter. It is good to hear the news from Turin once per month and I look forward to future editions.