

NEWS FROM ITALY

As usual, a summary of the news taken from the electronic newsletter *Sindone News*, produced by the Diocesan Commission for the Holy Shroud.

On Saturday 10th of May there was a pilgrimage to the Shroud which was both regular and new at the same time. It was regular because the pilgrims were Russian and more and more the Russian orthodox – laymen and monks, alone or in groups – come to Turin to venerate the Shroud; it was new because the group was composed of ministers of the Government of the Russian Confederation, among whom was one of the vice-premiers of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Led spiritually by Archbishop Clement of Kaluga, vice-president of the Department for Foreign Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow, the group of pilgrims had gone to Bari for the Feast of San Nicola, their patron saint, and stopped in Turin on their way back to Moscow. Welcomed in the Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista by the president of the Ecumenical Commission of the Archdiocese, Monsignor Oreste Favaro, by the priest of the Cathedral, Fr. Francesco Cavallo and by the Representative of the Cardinal, Don Andrea Pacini, the Russian orthodox pilgrims were led in a moment of prayer, showing their strong devotion to the Shroud and confirming the deep ecumenical importance it has for the orthodox churches.

On Wednesday 18th June at 15:30, Prince Vittorio Emanuele, Marina and Emanuele Filiberto di Savoy, together with Prince Sergio of Yugoslavia and a small retinue arrived at Turin Cathedral for a private visit to the Holy Shroud. The Papal Guardian of the Holy Shroud, Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin, the Chairman of the Diocesan Commission for the Holy Shroud of Turin, Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti and the members of the commission were at the entrance to the church to meet the visitors.

The Cardinal, who had previously met the princes of Savoy at the Archbishop's see, accompanied them to the altar of the Holy Sacrament to say a prayer, then granted them a private showing of the Holy Shroud (through the glass of the reliquary).

In 2003, just as the last two years, the Holy Shroud Museum agreed to the project proposed by the Municipality of Turin, "Musei gratis a Ferragosto". (Museums free of charge on the 15th of August).

The project met with success beyond all expectations, for our Museum especially. Despite the day traditionally being dedicated to outings or to short vacations, there were over 160 visitors. It is a comforting fact that whereas over the past few years foreign tourists were predominant, this year the trend reversed: the Turinese devoted themselves

to the cultural resources of their city, by discovering or rediscovering little-known places.

Our Museum, unique as regard to content, met with great success, and even the media, in the context of the general activities, gave prominence to the large number of visitors to the Holy Shroud Museum. For many people of Turin it turned out to be a stimulating discovery producing strong and deep emotions. For others it was a revisiting, a precise choice in wanting to set aside some time to collect their thoughts on this day, a symbolic holiday, and reflect on the mystery of the imprint of the Man of Sorrows. And they all left a precious promise: “We will come again!”