

WHO'S WHO IN THE SHROUD WORLD

An Interview with Bruno Barberis

1) What role does the Shroud Museum play in international Shroud studies?

The Museum of the Shroud is first of all a museum and therefore it has the task of making the Shroud understandable to all visitors, in particular the ones who do not know much about it. For this reason the following didactic criteria have been drawn up, in order to provide any visitor (more than 10,000 every “normal” year, i.e. without expositions of the Shroud, 65% coming from outside Italy) a correct, complete and understandable message on the Shroud. The answers given by the visitors of 2002 to a questionnaire distributed on leaving the Museum describe a very positive judgement, with 97% of visitors declaring their satisfaction both with the organisation of the Museum and with the objective way the Shroud is presented.

The International Centre of Sindonology is the institution (formed in 1959 within the Confraternity of the Holy Shroud) responsible for carrying on research activity. The members of the Centre are scholars interested in the Shroud, with no bounds for faith or nationality. In Italy the Centre is organised in regional delegations and outside the country it is represented by national delegates. Moreover, the Centre is the scientific consultant to the Papal Custodian of the Holy Shroud – the Archbishop of Turin – and of the Turin Shroud Committee. The Centre publishes the journal *Sindon*, various books on the Shroud and the proceedings of the various national and international congresses organised. It also promotes hundreds of conferences, round tables and meetings on the Shroud every year, both in Italy and abroad.

2) How did you first become involved with the Shroud?

My interest for the Shroud was born in 1975, when, after having obtained my degree in Mathematics at the University of Turin, I met Professor Tino Zeuli in my department. Zeuli was a great scholar of the Shroud who was my teacher in sindonology and introduced me into the Confraternity and the Centre. At that time I did not know that some years after I would become his successor as President of the Confraternity and of the Centre for fifteen years (1988-2002), while since 2002 I have been the scientific Director of the Centre.

My life has changed since that distant year of 1975, because the Shroud and its message have become a very important part of my life: proof of this is the 100 plus articles I have written and over 800 lectures I have given on the Shroud up to now.

3) In what direction do you think Shroud studies should take over the next few years?

I think that we are at present in a certain stalemate situation essentially due to the fact that real new progress will only be possible with the acquisition of new data. Otherwise the risk is the one of re-proposing and re-working old theories without being able to take definite and serious steps forward.

At the international Congress *The Turin Shroud: past, present and future* held in Turin in 2000 and reserved to forty guest scholars, I proposed a research programme for the next few years structured in the following phases:

- a) The collection of investigation and research proposals coming from groups of scientists or individual experts.
- b) The appointment, by the Shroud owner or by the Papal Custodian, of an International group of peer referees with the task to examine, evaluate and select the proposals.
- c) The appointment, by the Shroud owner or by the Papal Custodian, of an International Committee which, based on the answers and observations of the peer reviewers, will draw up a precise and detailed work protocol containing the list of data to be obtained, the operations to be undertaken for the collection of this data, the equipment to be used and the organisation or group to whom the data collection is to be entrusted. The protocol can become operative only after it has been definitively authorised by the owner of the Shroud.
- d) The collection of data, in accordance with the above protocol and under the surveillance of the International Committee, taking into account the condition that all the operations scheduled must be conducted in the absolute respect of the integrity of the Shroud cloth and of its new conservation requirements.
- e) The consignment of the data to the scientists who have requested them and whose research has been approved by the International Committee, in accordance with the rules decided by the owner of the Shroud.

At present a) and b) have already been carried out and we are waiting for the answers of the peer referees who are still working on the proposals received. I hope that in the near future it will be possible to complete all this research programme, in order to have the

possibility - starting from the results obtained in 1978 - of undertaking new serious research, capable of providing a real deeper knowledge of the Shroud.

4) What do you do professionally – apart from the Shroud?

I am a mathematician (I teach mathematical physics, analysis, electromagnetic waves and biomathematics at the Faculty of Science of the University of Turin) and work in the field of cosmology. My research activity is in particular related to the study of the homogeneous (isotropic and anisotropic) cosmological models of the Universe, inverse problems in the theory of the Newtonian field of gravitation and the history of modern cosmology. In these fields I have published more than fifty papers.