

News from Italy

From the March 2008 edition of Sindone News

THE SHROUD MUSEUM: TENTH ANNIVERSARY

On April 15th, 1998, at the same time as the official ceremony opening the first of two expositions decided by John Paul II, the Confraternity of the Holy Shroud inaugurated the new Museum of the Shroud located on the ground floor of the via S. Domenico 28 and in the crypt of the SS. Sudario Church which had just been restored.

Ten years have passed since that moment. It is a period during which the museum has grown in every respect: in visitors, in the number of objects on display, in new exhibition sections. It has moreover increasingly become a point of reference for those working in the news media: radio, television and press.

From the day of its opening until today over one hundred and forty thousand people have visited the museum: individuals, families and organized groups coming from all over the world. Many of them have wanted to leave their impressions written on a specially provided book placed at the exit of the museum; reading them, it is obvious how the Holy Shroud raises questions and provokes thought in those who approach it. In other words, here is confirmation that the Holy Shroud really is a “challenge to intelligence” and a “mirror of the Gospel” as John Paul II prophetically stated in front of the Shroud on the occasion of his 1998 pilgrimage.

In these years the Museum has increased the number of collections displayed in the showcases with new objects coming from donations and new acquisitions. Moreover, with the help of the Unione Italiana Ciechi (Italian Union of the Blind) it has provided a path for the blind that is made up of 14 stages; each stage offers the visitor “touch tables,” bas relief objects to explore with the hands which considered all together explain the Shroud. Furthermore, faithful to its mission to make known the studies on the Shroud, it has organized two new showcases which explain and document the various phases of the conservation works on the Shroud carried out in June-July 2002, complete with pictures and original objects. The Museum is attentive to the needs of visitors: their constant increase has led to the installation of a multi-language system synchronized with the showing of the video which allows people of different nationalities and languages to see it at the same time. This is in addition to the audio-guides in various languages which have been in use for some years.

Two new rooms are going to be opened on the ground floor. These will house, on a new mounting, the official photographs of the Shroud taken on different occasions, starting with the first one taken by Secondo Pia in 1898, up until the ones taken by Gian Durante in 2002. The space left in the crypt by the photographs has allowed us to add a new section to the original path. This section is devoted to the first scientific studies on the Shroud and to the controversy over the photograph of Secondo Pia that developed in the first years of the last century. Through the exhibition of the original documents of Pia’s archives and publications of the period, the museum intends to provide the opportunity to understand the origin of the research on the Shroud at the multi-disciplinary level and its development up until the 1950’s.

The museum has become the point of reference for many broadcasting corporations and TV networks of various nationalities which want to provide information on the Shroud in their respective countries. Here it is sufficient to remember the recent film produced by the BBC of the United Kingdom which was broadcast on Italian television on RAI 1 during the television programme “Porta a porta” on the evening of Easter Monday.

These excellent results are no excuse for the Museum to rest on its laurels, as they act as a spur and a commitment to continue with the service of the Shroud to provide serious and up-to-date information to the increasing numbers of attentive and demanding visitors who arrive.

Here we wish once more to reiterate our deepest gratitude to the many people who in these years have cooperated and supported the activity of the Museum. They really are a great number, but we owe a special thank you to the Friends of the Museum, to the Volunteers of the Shroud, and to the members of the Confraternity, whose generous help in the management of the Museum has been fundamental to guarantee its opening and its utilization and it will continue to be so also in the future.

From the June 2008 edition of Sindone News

2 JUNE 2008 – THE POPE – THE EXPOSITION

The Shroud is a gift which our Lord has given to his Church, and the church of Turin bears a particular responsibility. It is natural for the Shroud to be involved in an experience of faith in Turin. Recently the diocese of Turin organized an important pilgrimage to Rome, as the conclusion of a path of consciousness of faith, the “redditio fidei.” Cardinal Poletto guided over 7,000 pilgrims to the tombs of the apostle Peter and Paul and at the end, in the morning of 2 June, the Pope granted a special audience to the group in the Aula Nervi. The Cardinal greeted the Pope and he answered with a speech inspiring faith, until he came to a passage which we wish to quote in full:

But not everything ends here: after this restoring pause in Rome, it is necessary to carry on and new engagements await you. Indeed you will devote the next pastoral year to the Word of God, and the following one will find you oriented towards a more thoughtful contemplation of the mystery of the Passion of Christ. In this context, I am delighted to fulfill your great expectation and grant the wish of your Archbishop by consenting to another solemn “Exposition of the Shroud” in the spring of 2010. If our Lord gives me life and health, I hope that I too will be able to attend this Exposition. It will be an extremely propitious occasion – I am sure – to contemplate that mysterious Face, which silently speaks to people’s hearts, inviting them to recognize in it the face of God, who “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3,16).

After the speech some diocesans were presented to the Pope: among them also some members of the Diocesan Commission of the Shroud, of the Confraternity of the Holy Shroud and of the

International Centre of Sindonology. The Diocese of Turin moreover gave the Pope a life-sized photographs of the Shroud and a composition with an elegant Plexiglas support containing, between two panes fixed on turning pins, a double photograph (Gian Durante 2002) with the front and the back of the Shroud precisely corresponding, so that the Holy Father, by turning the panes, can have a precise view of the two sides of the Shroud linen. The Pope very much appreciated this little present, and we are most grateful for the gift he gave us of the exposition and his promise that he would come. We hope that he will be able to keep this promise, in good health: we will do our best for this to come about and we ask all our readers to join us in our prayer.

And now, dear Friends, you can guess what the most important commitment of the next two years is going to be. We shall be striving to get ready to welcome the numerous pilgrims, starting with the Pope and all of you, to revere together this holy Trust that our Lord left us of His boundless love.

INITIAL INFORMATION

As far as the dates are concerned, the Pope referred to Spring 2010 and our Cardinal Archbishop, in accordance with the Authority, has appointed the beginning of the Exposition on Saturday, 10 April, at the end of Easter week. The end could be around 15 or 22 May, which is the Saturday before Ascension Day or the one before Pentecost. In the following Sindone News we will be able to provide more detailed information.

We are taking the first steps towards setting in motion the great organizing machine, in cooperation with the Public Authorities of the Region, Province and Town Council in accordance with the Superintendence. For the friends who require information and would like to offer their help and their services while we are focusing on the campaign for voluntary work, for the summer months, please signal your willingness to assist by call the secretary's office of the Shroud Commission.

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