

Idina le Geyt

First, what a marvellous treat to have such erudite speakers on our tour - to have the opportunity to listen to author and Shroud scholar Mark Guscin on two evenings and to have him accompany us to the Shroud Museum and see the original camera Secondo Pia used in 1898, the casket that carried the Shroud from Chambéry to Turin in 1578, the silver studded reliquary in which it was rolled until 1998 and many other fascinating objects. A highlight was to have the famous photographer Aldo Guerreschi give us a demonstration on his laptop of 3-D moving images of the Holy Face. Aldo worked with Giuseppe Enrie and is custodian of his famous photographs of 1931. Aldo demonstrated to us his discovery from a study of certain water stains that the Shroud at one stage must have been folded in a vertical position in an ancient earthenware jar similar to ones found in Qumran. We also heard from Mark Guscin extraordinary details about the blood stains on the Sudarium of Oviedo in Spain, pointing to it being the napkin “that had been round Jesus’ head” and found by the disciples “folded up by itself, separate from the other linen” in the tomb, as described in St John.

We were valiantly looked after by our tour guide Tony Camilleri who managed to arrange things splendidly in spite of our different requirements and a constantly changing number of pilgrims. It was a pleasure to get to know Reggie and Emily Norton and hear so many extra nuggets of information from Reggie, and to see Ian Wilson’s latest book just published, in which he turns the tables on the critics, inviting them to disprove rather than prove the authenticity of the Shroud. Many new discoveries have emerged, including the fascinating detail that the blood appeared on the cloth before the image was made.

The next morning we enjoyed a splendid tour of Turin in a most comfortable coach with Sonia Bruna, our attractive and informative guide, proceeding along tree-lined avenues and taking in the beautiful Valentino Park beside the River Po, and afterwards on foot with her to see the baroque palaces, the superb piazzas and monuments, the arcades and historic cafés - we completely fell in love with Turin and hope to return one day. That night we had thunder and lightning, as if to remind us of the time 2,000 years ago when the sky darkened and the Temple sanctuary curtain was rent asunder.

The day of our visit to the Cathedral dawned. As we joined the queues and wandered slowly through the Royal Gardens and wound our way up the ramps and into the cloisters, we had time for solemn contemplation while watching the brief video before with growing excitement we at last entered the darkness of the Cathedral and saw the Holy Shroud itself glowing in front of us. What a fragile cloth to have lasted 2,000 years and how carefully it has been restored! It was a profoundly moving experience to be in its presence, to go back 2,000 years and to become for a brief moment intimate witnesses ourselves to Jesus’ intense suffering on the cross. Although I had been privileged to see the Shroud in 1978 it was still a moving experience to see it again. As we slowly filed out we agreed the whole event was very well managed by the volunteers and guards, who were competent without being intrusive.

Some of us were fortunate to be able to return inside the Cathedral to pray and meditate on the Shroud from a distance, and to absorb its energies once more. We also

were able to see there Gagna's copy of Leonardo's *The Last Supper*. Neil and I revisited the beautiful Church of San Lorenzo which had particularly enthralled Neil. On reading on our return the guidebook by Enrico Natale (with photographs by Aldo Guerreschi) we realized that Guarino Guarini, the architect priest, had devised a church constructed of several levels towards the light, symbolizing man's journey to God.

Of course a great part of our enjoyment of the trip came from our fellow pilgrims, who helped each other, tending to those who were less active, instructing fools (like us) who were quite incapable of finding the tram stop to return to our hotel, and above all certain pilgrims, bless them, keeping up a constant wry and witty commentary which was necessary light relief to the awesomeness of the proceedings. Certain pilgrims even remained cheerful having been flooded out of their bedrooms on the last night.

Too soon, our plane bore us regretfully away from what had been a sacred audience, and the visit left us in peaceful quietness which lasted throughout the next day, so we immersed ourselves in the 86-minute documentary by Alberto di Giglio (*The Shroud – 2010*) purchased in the Turin Bookshop which draws together research results from diverse scientific disciplines and vividly reveals the parallels between the Gospels and the evidence displayed on the Shroud, showing it to be both a terrible and true mirror of the Gospels, a proof of resurrection, the hope of mankind.