

Ann Rose

As we shuffled through the cathedral towards the Shroud, music played, people handed us prayer cards and my heart started pounding gently. We stopped and were directed into three queues, and I suddenly spied the Shroud between the columns to the right, and gazed at its brightness while we waited for our turn. Stepping round onto the viewing platforms we stood and stared silently at this extraordinary object while a prayer was quietly read out in Italian. The image, the wounds and bloodstains were easily visible and having looked at reproductions many times over the years it seemed quite surreal to think that I was looking at the actual cloth. Was this real, not a fake, not a forgery, nothing made by human hands? Were these truly the stains of the blood of Christ, this the cloth that held the tortured body of Jesus? I didn't make the sign of the cross as I might normally in church - I just stared at this cloth, with its beautiful and dignified face, in sorrow at what our Lord endured for us.

I shall be forever grateful to the BSTS, to Reggie for organising the trip, and to Mark, who not only travelled with us for much of the journey but captivated us with his knowledge and impromptu talks, and introduced us to Aldo Guerreschi, who showed us his remarkable photos and images. To all, thank you!