

News from Italy

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TESTS ON THE CONSERVATION CASE OF THE HOLY SHROUD: POSITIVE OUTCOME

In recent days a general check up was carried out on the control and security systems of the chapel and of the conservation case in which the Holy Shroud is kept, in the chapel beneath the Royal Gallery in Turin Cathedral. It is a necessary and thorough check-up procedure ten years after the current conservation case was built and its security systems installed. The tests concerned above all the system which manages the internal atmosphere in the Shroud case where a mixture of gases circulate whose percentages are constant, and all the various other components of the conservation regime.

The results of the tests were positive, and the working of the system during this decade has also been positive. Conserving the Holy Shroud in a horizontal position, together with the operations carried out in 2002, has meant that we can confirm that at present the Shroud is in the best conditions of conservation possible within the limits of current scientific knowledge.

Testing the system required the Holy Shroud to be temporarily transferred to the new sacristy of the Cathedral, where it was protected night and day by a private security service company. Moreover, during the examination a “guard of honour” was always present near the Holy Shroud, with prayer shifts attended also by some “Shroud volunteers” who receive and welcome pilgrims to the cathedral and to the Museum of the Shroud every day.

The temporary removal of the Shroud from the conservation case also provided the opportunity to take some photographic and video footage. In particular the Custodian, with the consent of the Holy See that is the owner of the Shroud, allowed a series of high definition pictures to be taken by the company Hal 9000 of Novara using new advanced technology. In this way it will be possible to obtain particularly accurate pictures of the Shroud in order to satisfy the pastoral requirements of spreading knowledge of the Shroud image.

This was to be used for the first time in the pastoral project promoted by the Diocese of Novara: an enlarged reproduction print of the Shroud was shown there throughout the period of Lent. This reproduction will then be sent to Sydney (Australia) and it will be exhibited on World Youth Day next August 2008, at which Pope Benedict XVI will also participate.

Another series of high definition video footage was shot by the English television group managed by David Rolfe, former author of the documentary “The Silent Witness” (1978). This film material will go towards increasing the heritage of pictures available to the ownership for spreading news about the Shroud. Some of it was used in a documentary which was broadcast on the international network on 22 March, Holy Saturday, by English BBC television.