

Information for the press

An important series of interventions has been completed on the Shroud in the period between last June and July, in the area of the Turin Cathedral:

- 1. the Shroud has been completely unstitched from the Holland cloth, on which it had been fixed since 1534; all the “patches”, sewn by the Clare nuns of Chambéry, have been removed and a new support has been joined to the Shroud Cloth;***
- 2. the complete digital scansion, both on the image side and on the posterior one, has been carried out;***
- 3. a new complete photographic documentation of the Shroud has been realized.***

All the operations have been carried out under the surveillance of the Papal Custodian, the Archbishop of Turin Card. Severino Poletto. The works have been followed, in all their steps, by the Assistants of the Custodian, Mgr. Giuseppe Ghiberti and Prof. Piero Savarino, with the collaboration of the diocesan Commission for the Shroud and of the Commission for the conservation. The interventions have been executed starting from the indications worked out by the Commission for the Conservation since 1992; the program has been approved by the Custodian and the owner (the Holy See).

1. Unstitching and substitution of patches

Dr. Mechthild Flury Lemberg, emeritus director of the school of restoration of the ancient cloths near the Abegg Museum of Bern, executed, in collaboration with the restorer Irene Tomedi, the wide and complex intervention of unstitching of the Shroud Cloth from the patches and the underlying “Holland cloth”, the lining to which it had been joined since 1534, when the Clare nuns of Chambéry intervened in order to repair the damages of the 1532 fire.

The separation of the Shroud from the Holland cloth was necessary in order to reduce the problem of the folds on the Cloth and to limit the damages caused by the carbon residues: after the decision to conserve the extended Shroud, not rolled up anymore, there is a further improvement of the conservation conditions, just because the seam points (along the edges, in correspondence of the patches and other zones) stretched the Cloth in an irregular and uncontrolled way, with the risk to deepen the existing folds or to create some new ones. Moreover, the conditions of cleanness of the lining had become remarkably worrisome.

The intervention of the patches removal has been equally important: the interstices between the patches cloth and the Shroud Linen had accumulated dusts and debris for centuries, and a remarkable amount of microscopic fragments of carbonated cloth.

All the material removed from the Shroud has been collected and catalogued, with the relative photographic documentation, and is guarded by the Archiepiscopal Chancery of Turin.

Dr. Flury Lemberg has substituted the old Holland cloth with a new support, sewing along the perimeter and in a “wide” way in correspondence of the burn edges, so that it is possible to verify in every point the “non-invasiveness” of the intervention carried out.

The substitution of the Holland cloth will allow the future conservation of the Linen in a condition of greater safety as to the cloth tensions. The “cleaning” of the burn residues and debris from the edges guarantees, moreover, a better conservation.

The opportunity of this intervention had been emphasized with force by the lamented Prof. Alan Adler, member of the Commission for the Conservation.

2. Digital scansion

For the first time the complete digital scansion of the two “faces” of the Shroud (the first partial scansion had been carried out in November 2000) has been realized. The intervention has been executed by Prof. Paul Soardo, of the “Istituto Elettrotecnico Nazionale Galileo Ferraris” of Turin, in collaboration with Doctors Jacomussi and Rossi.

The complete digital mapping will allow to carry out a wide series of non-invasive studies on the Shroud.

3. The new photographs

The interventions carried out, and, above all, the removal of the patches, has given back a “image” of the Shroud that, at the first impact, is a bit different from the one everybody remembers. For this reason, the Giandurante studio has carried out a new complete series of photographs, of which some samples are given.

The most representative images are published in the issue published for the press conference, and are available on the official website of the Shroud (www.Shroud.org). The scientific and photographic documentation of the interventions of sewing again and digital scansion will be published in the volume, which is being prepared and completing the documentation of the “season of the exhibitions”, concluding what had been started with the publication of “The two faces of the Shroud”. The new volume will also contain the scientific documentation of the interventions of sewing again and digital scansion.

Turin, September 21, 2002