

The Third International Dallas Shroud Conference

The Third International Dallas Conference on the Shroud of Turin was held in Dallas, Texas, from 8 to 11 September 2005. The conference was jointly organized by the American Shroud Centre AM*STAR and the Italian Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia, based in Turin. This was the first time ever that a Shroud conference had been jointly sponsored by any American and European centres, and so the occasion was significant.

Quite logically, the 2002 restoration work carried out on the Shroud under the direction of Mechthild Flury Lemberg was always going to be a central point to the debate and discussion. Flury Lemberg was present and read a paper at the congress, while the more critical point of view about the restoration work was aired in a film interview with the late Ray Rogers, presented by Barrie Schwartz.

Following is a summary of the events by conference organizer **Mike Minor**:

The Third Dallas International Conference on the 'Shroud of Turin was a significant event in sindonological history. The conference was held from September 8-11, 2005 in the Grand Ball Room of the historic Adolphus Hotel, a grand five star hotel built in 1910 which has hosted Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip and most of the 20th century American presidents.

Pope Benedict XVI sent a papal blessing to the conference which was read by Bishop Kevin Vann, Bishop of Fort Worth, Texas who officially opened the conference. The Dallas Shroud Conference was the first conference ever to receive a papal blessing which stated in part:

"The Holy Father was pleased to be informed that on 8-11 September 2005 an International Conference on the Shroud of Turin will be held in Dallas. He asks you kindly to convey to all present his greetings and prayerful good wishes.

His Holiness trusts that the Dallas Conference will advance cooperation and dialogue among the various groups engaged in scientific research on the shroud and in promoting awareness of its outstanding religious significance. He is convinced that the growth of such collaboration, in complete respect for the autonomy of distinct areas of competence, will contribute to the important pastoral aim of making the mystery of the Shroud better known and enabling its message to touch the hearts of men and women everywhere. It is his hope that progress will also be made towards developing a comprehensive theological study of this precious gift of God present in the Church.

With those sentiments the Holy Father invokes upon all taking part in the Dallas Conference the abundant graces bestowed by the Crucified and Risen Lord, and cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing."

His Eminence Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin, and Papal Custodian of the Holy Shroud, also sent a message to the Conference which was read by Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti, which stated in part:

“... What can the Papal Custodian of the Holy Shroud say to a scientific congress? I am a human being like everybody else and in particular I have a specific responsibility on behalf of the Church towards the Shroud, I react like every other sensitive person at the sight of the image of such excruciating suffering that I see imprinted on the Shroud. At the same time I feel the obligation to offer guidance to all those who are willing to heed my words when they approach this mysterious image... As a human being I too feel passionately involved in the adventure of this scientific investigation. But I also know that this research is not directly the task of the Church but instead it is that of science. " As it is not a matter of faith", Pope John Paul II said during his pilgrimage to the Shroud on 24 May 1998, “the Church does not have specific competence to pronounce on these questions. It entrusts to scientists the task of continuing to investigate to find suitable answers to the questions regarding the Shroud”, Your scientific congress is an important moment in the research and I warmly wish you every success, I am also delighted that some members of the Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia (International Centre of Sindonology) are attending. The Centro was founded in Turin within the activities of the ancient Confraternita del Santissimo Sudario (Confraternity of the Holy Shroud) and it works in strict connection with the cultural activities promoted by the Archdiocese of Turin. Harmony and dialogue among scientists are an excellent premise for fruitful research. However the reality of the Shroud requires us to consider the mystery of salvation which is an even more profound question... I wish all the participants to the Congress assembled here great success in their research and great satisfaction in experiencing a common purpose during their work. There will be many questions during these days. How can we get closer to the moment and to the way in which the Shroud and its image were made? How can we best participate in the praiseworthy conservation efforts that the Holy See, the owner of the Shroud, set in motion several years ago? Let every heart also ask this question: what must happen in my life so that my contact with this mystery may achieve the purpose for which God has brought me here?”

The Conference was jointly sponsored by the American Shroud Of Turin Association for Research (AMSTAR) and the Holy Shroud Guild in collaboration with the Centro Internazionale Di Sindonologia (CENTRO).

A delegation from Turin headed by Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti, representative and spokesperson for Cardinal Poletto in shroud matters attended and participated in the Conference. Others in the Turin delegation were Professor Dr. Pierluigi Baima Bollone, Professor Dr. Mechthilde Fleury-Lemberg and Susan Phillips. The Third Dallas Conference is also the first conference outside Italy in which the Turin authorities have participated.

Security for the Dallas Conference was provided by the world famous Texas Rangers which was on a partly pro bono basis.

Between 165 and 200 people from many countries attended and participated in the conference which included Mexico, Canada, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, Australia, Spain and many states within the United States.

The international media was well represented at the conference. Representatives from many major newspapers, magazines, television networks and film and documentary producers were among the media who attended the conference. NBC News from New York City sent a crew of four to film and cover the conference.

The purpose of the Dallas Conference was to present the latest research on the Shroud in many areas of scholarship and scientific research and to set the record straight about the controversial 2002 restoration of the Shroud in which the patches sewn over the burn holes following the 1532 fire were removed. Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti, Dr. Mechthild Fluery-Lemberg, Professor Bruno Barberis, Professor Dr. Pierluigi Baima Bollone, Dr. Gian Maria Zaccone and Nello Ballosino gave papers which addressed the 2002 restoration as well as other topics.

Dr. Fleury-Lemberg and Monsignor Ghiberti frankly answered all written questions submitted by the attendees concerning the 2002 Restoration and candidly addressed the many unfounded rumors, which arose after the Restoration and which have persisted until the present.

Inasmuch as Dr. Fleury-Lemberg has been the target of many of the rumors, at the conference, she addressed and responded to the following questions concerning rumors:

Q.: WAS THE SHROUD WASHED?

A.: NO, THE SHROUD WAS NOT WASHED.

Q.: WAS THE ENTIRE SHROUD VACUUMED?

A.: NO, THE ENTIRE SHROUD WAS NOT VACUUMED.

Q.: WAS THE SHROUD BLEACHED?

A.: NO, THE SHROUD WAS NOT BLEACHED.

Q.: WAS THE SHROUD STEAM CLEANED?

A.: NO, THE SHROUD WAS NOT STEAM CLEANED.

Q.: WAS THE SHROUD IRONED OR WERE WRINKLES IRONED OUT?

A.: NO, THE SHROUD WAS NOT IRONED NOR WERE WRINKLES IRONED OUT.

Q.: WERE WEIGHTS USED TO REMOVE WRINKLES OR FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE?

A.: NO WEIGHTS WERE USED TO REMOVE WRINKLES NOR WERE WEIGHTS HUNG OFF THE SIDES OF THE SHROUD FOR THIS PURPOSE. HOWEVER, ONE (1) KILOGRAM (2.2 lbs.) WEIGHTS WERE PLACED ON GLASS (TO AVOID CONTAMINATION) WHICH WAS PLACED NEAR THE WORK AREA(S) IN ORDER TO IMMOBILIZE THE SHROUD WHILE UNSTITCHING AND STITCHING WERE IN PROGRESS. THE SHROUD WAS NOT IN ANY MANNER PLACED UNDER TENSION DURING THE 2002 PROCEDURES.

Q.: WHY WAS COTTON CLOTH USED FOR THE NEW BACKING CLOTH OF THE SHROUD?

A.: IT WAS NECESSARY TO REMOVE THE HOLLAND CLOTH BECAUSE IT WAS CREATING TENSION ON THE LINEN OF THE SHROUD. OVER THE CENTURIES THE HOLLAND CLOTH SEEMS TO HAVE SHRUNK. COTTON CLOTH WAS NOT USED TO REPLACE THE HOLLAND CLOTH. A LARGE PIECE OF AN APPROXIMATELY HUNDRED YEAR OLD PURE UNBLEACHED LINEN WAS IN FACT USED TO REPLACE THE HOLLAND CLOTH.

Q.: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HOLLAND CLOTH WHEN REMOVED?

A.: THE HOLLAND CLOTH WHICH WAS REMOVED FROM THE BACK OF THE SHROUD HAS BEEN PRESERVED AND IS IN THE POSSESSION OF THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF TURIN.

Q.: WAS THERE EVER A PLAN TO "TRIM" THE SHROUD OR CUT AWAY THE BURNED PORTIONS ALONG THE SIDES?

A.: NO, THERE WAS NEVER A PLAN TO "TRIM" THE SHROUD OR CUT AWAY THE BURNED PORTIONS ALONG THE SIDES.

The keynote address was given by Monsignor Ghiberti at the gala Saturday evening banquet. There was much gaiety at the banquet which also became a surprise birthday party for Don Giuseppe, who was treated with an elegant birthday cake and "Happy Birthday" was sung to Don Giuseppe by all present. The conference organizers presented a special birthday gift to Don Giuseppe which was a handsomely framed hand illuminated octavo leaf on unborn calf skin from a theological treatise of Peter Lombard, the premiere theologian of the middle ages and one of the professors of St. Thomas Aquinas. Several 'gag gifts' were presented at the banquet which included a book entitled "The Fires I Have Been In" presented to Don Giuseppe and a copy of Shakespeare's play "Much Ado About Nothing" was presented to Emanuella Marinelli. A sewing kit was presented to Dr. Mechthild Fleury-Lemberg and a paint by numbers coloring book and crayolas were presented to Dame Isabel Piczek.

The Grand Ball Room was graced by one of Dame Isabel Piczek's gigantic 30'x30' cartoons of the Christ figure in one of her magnificent monumental works. The Turin CENTRO kindly sent a magnificent actual size ("1:1") photograph of the 'new' Shroud, or as the Shroud now appears following the removal of the patches, as well as two life size

frontal and dorsal images of the Shroud, all of which were displayed in the Grand Ball Room.

The DeRance Foundation generously loaned a large almost full size back lit transparency of the Shroud which was also displayed at the conference and which was kindly brought to the conference and set up by Kevin Moran. Kevin went far above and beyond the call of duty and made the sacrificial effort of hauling the huge transparency and its frame over 2000 miles by car.

There was also a special exhibit at the Conference of about 20 of Dame Isabel's sacred art original color plans for murals, mosaics, and stained glass which were displayed in a separate large and elegant room.

Thirty scholars and scientists gave papers at the conference. A number of other papers were submitted, but because of time constraints, could not be read at the conference, but will be included in the conference acts. Dorothy Crispino of Babano, Italy acted as chairperson of the peer review committee for the conference papers. The peer reviewers included many experts in numerous disciplines.

Tom Sullivan of Florida was the official audiographer of the conference. Complete audio tape or CD sets of the entire conference or individual presentations can be obtained by contacting Tom at: thomasksullivan.com Both cds and audio tapes are available. Sets of the presentations at the 2001 conference can also still be obtained from Tom Sullivan whose mailing address is: 13031 Canton Avenue, Hudson, Florida 34669, USA.

Many significant and important papers were given at the Dallas Conference which included Ray Rogers' peer reviewed paper on the controversial issue of "invisible re-weaving" at the sight from which the sample was removed in 1988 for radio carbon dating.

An extremely significant paper was presented by Dame Isabel Piczek who is also a particle physicist. Her paper, while dealing with the position of the Body within the cloth, brought attention upon a hereto undiscussed interface. This mysterious interface divides the image transport into two hermetically separate, although simultaneous actions and forces the Shroud linen to be taut and parallel on both sides with this interface. The two images on the Shroud are also semi - three dimensional, very much as a bas relief; and because of that they also record the side image in two halves in a most complex way. The bas relief effect of the Shroud can not be fully explained even by modern science. Through it we enter into a new age of Shroud research. These suggestions were not only verbally expressed but visually explained through three statues, each one third life size, which were on display at the conference.

Besides the papers presented by the Turinese scholars, Diana Fulbright, Kevin Moran, Dr. Al Whanger, Dr. Gus Accetta, Aldo Guerreschi and many others presented excellent papers.

Professor Avinoam Danin of Jerusalem contributed a large specimen of the gruesome plant with 3" needle sharp thorns, Gundilia tunaforte, commonly known as the "Crown of Thorns" plant, pollens of which have been found on the Shroud. A first century bronze Roman dagger was also on display at the conference.

Many Shroud books, photographs, posters, medals and other materials were made available to the conference attendees by AMSTAR, The Holy Shroud Guild and the CENTRO.

The Dallas Conference was a great success and an important and unique event in the annals of Shroud history.