

## The History of the Holy Shroud

### The historical hypotheses before the 14th century

The **Gospel stories of Jesus' burial** are the first documents that **refer to the Holy Shroud**: "and Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock" (Mt 27: 59-60a). When **Peter and John** reach the tomb, after the women came and informed them, they didn't find the body of Jesus, instead they found only the Shroud and other burial cloths: "**Simon Peter** [...] went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple [...] also went in, and he **saw and believed**" (Jn 20: 6-8)

We do not possess precise information as to what happened after that. However, we do have enough evidence that right from the **first centuries following the resurrection of Jesus, his funeral cloths, including the Shroud, were carefully preserved and venerated by the Christians**. There are texts that mention that in the **5th - 6th century a portrait of Jesus** (called by the Greek word **Mandyllion** meaning "towel") "not made by human hands", **printed on a canvas, was kept** in the **city of Edessa** (now Urfa in Turkey on the Syrian border). According to a legend, **it was sent to Abgar, King of Edess, by Jesus Himself, with a miraculous impression of his own face on it**. Some scholars believe that **it could be the Shroud, today preserved in Turin**, which in those days was **exposed to the public folded into eight parts** so as to show only the face and hide the rest of the body. **In the 10th century the Mandyllion was transferred to Constantinople** (which, being the capital of the Byzantine Empire was the largest and richest city in Europe and the Middle East).

The **National Library of Budapest** has among its current possessions an interesting manuscript (**Codex Pray**) which dates back to the **12th century**, bearing a **miniature image of the lifeless body of Jesus and the women visiting the empty tomb**. **An angel points to the Shroud** that, **strikingly similar to the one preserved in Turin**, is of herringbone weave and has the same number of burn marks or holes in an "L-shape" pattern.

**Robert de Clari was a French knight**. He **took part in the Fourth Crusade in 1204**. In his diary, now preserved in the **Royal Library in Copenhagen**, he writes of having seen a **Holy Shroud of Jesus in a church of Constantinople**, and mentions that **it was exposed every Friday** and "one could see clearly **His whole body** as if standing". **Robert de Clari adds that the Crusaders sacked Constantinople** a few months later **and stole all the valuables stored in it, including the Shroud**.

It is likely that the **Shroud was stolen by a Frenchman** because in a **letter written in 1205** a member of the imperial family of the Pope claims to know that **the Shroud, which had previously been grabbed by the French, had been taken to Athens**.



#### **Historical information after the 14th century**

**A century passes, and finally we have more news concerning the Holy Shroud. We know that around 1350, the French knight Geoffroy de Charny built a church in Lirey (a small town, not far from Paris) to preserve and expose the Shroud to the faithful. We do not know how he came to possess the Holy Shroud, but we know that an ancestor of his second wife participated in the Fourth Crusade and this is indeed an interesting clue.**

**In the mid-800s a bronze medallion was found on the Seine riverbed belonging to a pilgrim who was taking it home as a souvenir of his visit to Lirey (probably between 1350-1360), in order to venerate the Holy Shroud. The medallion reproduces the double-impression of the Shroud, the herringbone cloth, and the coat of arms of the Charny family. This stands as the first sure testimony to the existence of pilgrimages to the Shroud in Europe.**

**During the first half of 400, due to the intensification of the Hundred Years' War, Marguerite de Charny withdrew from the Church of Lirey the Shroud (1418) and took it with him in his travels through Europe. At last she was welcomed at the court of the dukes of Savoy, which had been linked to both her father and her second husband, Umberto de La Roche. It was in that situation that occurred in 1453, the transfer of the Shroud to the Savoy as part of a series of legislative acts between the Duke Ludovico and Marguerite.**

**The Shroud remained a property of the Savoys until 1983, when the last king of Italy, Humbert II, finally donated it to the Pope before his death.**

**The House of Savoy, in order to house the Holy Shroud, built the Sainte-Chapelle at Chambery, the capital of their duchy. In 1532 a fire broke out in the Sainte-Chapelle and the damages caused to the Shroud are those visible today. Two years later, the Poor Clares of Chambery restored the Shroud by mending the damages caused by the fire with patches that would be removed subsequently in 2002.**

**In 1562, Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy (whose equestrian statue dominates the center of San Carlo's Square in Turin), moved the duchy capital from Chambery to Turin and a few years later, in 1578, did the same with the Holy Shroud. The official reason was to shorten the pilgrimage of San Carlo Borromeo, the Archbishop of Milan, who wanted to go to Chambery on foot to worship and fulfill a vow he had made during the terrible plague that struck Milan. Since then, except for two brief intervals, the Holy Shroud has always remained in Turin.**

**In the next century the Savoys commissioned architect Guarino Guarini to build a chapel between the Cathedral and the Royal Palace where the Shroud could be worthily and fittingly preserved. On 1 June 1694 the Shroud was devoutly moved to the Chapel where it was preserved until 1993.**

Autore:

Data:



**The year 1898 is of primary importance for the Holy Shroud.** Though it did seem to be a trivial fact, it would go down in history as a great finding. **The photographer Secondo Pia from Turin was commissioned to photograph the Shroud for the very first time.** On May 25th he took some trial pictures and on May 28th took the official photographs. **The examination of the photographic plates (just fifty years after the invention of photography, photographs were taken on glass plates) shows that the image had the characteristics of a photographic negative with light and shadow reversed compared to reality.** Now with a photographic image in their possession **the scholars could begin a scientific study of the Shroud.** Though such studies haven't ceased till today, despite the great advances in science, **many aspects still remain hidden from our comprehension.**

**The Holy Shroud was photographed officially seven other times: in 1931, 1969 (the first color photograph), 1997, 2000 and 2002. In 2008 and 2010 the Shroud was photographed in high definition.**

**During the Second World War, from 1939 to 1946, the Shroud was safely hidden at the Montevergine Abbey, near Avellino.**

**In 1993 the Shroud was transferred to the choir of the Cathedral of Turin permitting the restoration of the Guarini Chapel. On the evening of 11 April 1997, when restoration work was nearing completion, a raging fire broke out in the Chapel seriously damaging it. The Holy Shroud did not suffer any damage because it was carefully carried away by the fire fighters.**

**Since 1998, the Holy Shroud has been preserved in a new modern casket, spread out horizontally, protected from light and filled with the inert gas, argon.**

**Since 2000, the Shroud has found permanent lodging in the fittingly renovated chapel in the under the royal stage Cathedral of Turin.**

**In 2002 the Shroud was subjected to a very important task of restoration. The patches sewn into the Shroud in 1534 over the burn holes caused by the fire accident were removed. The so-called Dutch cloth onto which it had been sewn was replaced. It will be possible to see it for the first time after its restoration, during the 2010 public display.**

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## The Exhibitions from 2010 to 2015

### The 2010 Exhibition

The first Holy Shroud exhibition of the Third Millennium in 2010 summoned to Turin over two and a half million pilgrims from all over Italy and the world. Pope Benedict XVI, who, in announcing the exhibition, in Sala Nervi, on June 2, 2008, had expressed the desire to carry out the pilgrimage, prayed before the Linen on Sunday 2 May.

This exhibition was organized ten years later than the 2000 one - the jubilee year one. It lasted 44 days, from April 10 to May 23, with the motto "Passio Christi Passio Hominis", an expression chosen by Cardinal Severino Poletto, the Pope custodian of the Shroud, to underline the deep bond between the Passion of the Lord and the many past and present human suffering.

In 2010 the Linen was for the first time shown after the painstaking restoration work carried out in 2002: the removal of the patches sewn by the Clarisse of Chambéry after the fire of 1532 and the cleaning-up of the Linen from the remains of relevant burnt fabric. These operations had been made necessary to safeguard the Shroud and to let the future generations to continue to admire this unique and fascinating image.

### Worldwide broadcast: March 30, 2013

On March 30, 2013, Holy Saturday, the Shroud was shown to the world on television during an extraordinary tv exhibition in the Cathedral of Turin.

The Archbishop of Turin and the Pope Custodian of the Shroud, mons. Cesare Nosiglia, wanted this exhibition, in agreement with the Holy See, as a step in the "new evangelization" path of the Year of Faith 2012-2013.

The TV exhibition took place in the Duomo of Turin, where the Shroud has been preserved for more than three centuries, in the Chapel under the royal tribune, during a live broadcasted liturgy with the Holy Shroud at the heart of the picture.

To mark his spiritual participation to this ceremony, Pope Francis sent a video message, exhorting to listen to the silent and suffering message of the Holy Shroud's face.

### 2015 – The Extraordinary Exhibition of the Shroud

The extraordinary exhibition of the Shroud in 2015 was granted by the Pope to celebrate the 200 years from the birth of St. John Bosco. A special attention in fact has been given to the Salesian world, to young people and to those who live in suffering conditions (the sick and their caregivers). For all these people were arranged specific ways of the pilgrimage.

The Shroud was exhibited in Turin in the cathedral of St. John the Baptist from 19 April to 24 June. More than two millions of pilgrims passed before it. The visit of Pope Francis took place on June 20th and 21th.

The motto of this exhibition, "The Greatest Love", was inspired by the Gospel of John (15: 13). According to it, the Holy Shroud is an evidence of the love of God, expressed in the Passion of Jesus Christ. It exhorts the people to devote oneself to the brothers and to the poor in particular.