

The Shroud of Turin
Solemn Exposition of an Official Replica
Authorized by the Archdiocese of Turin, Italy

Come and See!

By Bishop David Motiuk
Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton

Welcome and Introduction

It is with much love and great joy in my heart that I welcome you to Saint Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral as we solemnly receive and place on exposition for veneration an official replica of the Shroud of Turin.

While there are thousands of photographic reproductions of the Shroud of Turin around the world readily made available through the internet, our copy is even more unique among the handful of reproductions that have been authorized by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Turin, Italy, the custodians of the original shroud. It was made using the best photographic definition possible, and was authorized by the Archdiocesan Commission of the Shroud, which has verified the copy to original Shroud of Turin.

This authentic replica of the Shroud of Turin was gifted to the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton by the Archdiocese of Turin as part of our 25 Year Pastoral Plan for Spiritual Growth and Renewal. Truly a most precious gift!

During the two years from the time of the initial request to the Archdiocese of Turin for an official replica of the Shroud until today, I asked myself repeatedly, “Lord, if we are indeed blessed with a true copy of the Shroud of Turin, and open our doors wide to believers and non-believers alike, what will they come to see?”

And I ask that question of you today. What have you come to see?

At first glance, we have come out of curiosity to see this thing we call the Shroud of Turin.

What is it?

The Shroud of Turin, a quick overview

The shroud is a rectangular linen sheet woven in a herringbone pattern according to an ancient Egyptian style used both before and after the time of Christ.

The cloth measures 442 cm (14’ 6”) long by 113 cm (3’ 9”) wide.

There is a faint impression on it of an image of a man, front and back, indicating that he suffered extensive scourging and death by crucifixion. Piercing of the feet and wrist are clearly evident. A chest wound and wounds to the head inflicted by pointed instruments are plainly visible.

The “man of the shroud” has a beard, moustache and shoulder length hair parted in the middle. He is well-proportioned, muscular, and quite tall.

The Burial Cloth of Jesus?

Is the Shroud of Turin the burial cloth of Jesus?

Scientific analysis of the Shroud of Turin was permitted by the Holy See in 1976, 1978 and 1988. These conclude that the image is not the product of an artist using paints or dyes. The shroud has been in direct contact with a body, which explains certain features such as scourge marks and blood. But it cannot explain the image of the face with the high resolution demonstrated by photography.

How the image was produced remains a mystery.

While the Catholic Church has neither acknowledged nor denied the authenticity of the shroud, Pope John Paul II called it a “mirror of the Gospel.” Recently, Pope Benedict and Pope Francis described the shroud as an “icon.”

Actual burial cloth or not, the shroud is indeed an ancient and greatly venerated icon. And the essence of an icon is its representation of the Holy and participation in the Divine.

Picking up on Pope John Paul II’s reference to the shroud as a “mirror of the Gospel,” let us look more closely at the scriptural evidence for the shroud.

Scriptural Evidence for the Shroud, a Mirror of the Gospel

Jesus was scourged (Matthew 27: 26). The body in the shroud is covered with severe scourge wounds, as many as 120 on the back (including the legs). Whipping was done probably by a Roman flagrum, with evidence that there were two men whipping from two angles.

Jesus was struck a blow to the face (Matthew 27: 30). In the shroud there is severe swelling below the right eye; the nose is swollen or broken.

Jesus was “crowned” with thorns (Matthew 27: 28-29). In the shroud there is evidence of bleeding from scalp, and thorn fragments.

Jesus had to carry a heavy cross (John 19: 16-17). Shoulder wounds appear on the body in the shroud.

Jesus’ cross had to be carried for him after a while (Matthew 27: 32). The knees in the body in the shroud appear to be severely damaged as if from repeated falls.

Jesus was crucified by nailing hands and feet (John 20: 25). There are clear blood flows on the shroud from nail wounds in the wrists and feet.

Jesus' legs were not broken, but a spear was thrust into his side (John 19: 33-37). The legs on the body in the shroud are not broken. There is an elliptical wound on the right side between the 5th and 6th ribs and appears to have been inflicted by a Roman lance.

Jesus was taken down from the cross and wrapped in a linen shroud (Matthew 27: 57-60). The image on the shroud is consistent with the Jewish burial practice of wrapping a dead body.

Come and See! An invitation.

Let us return to the question with which we began. Today, what have you really come to see? Did you come to see this rectangular linen sheet with a faint impression on it of an image of a man? Or something more?

Yes, something much more!

Our childlike curiosity has led us through the path of discovery to the journey of faith.

We have come today at the invitation of God, through this exposition of the Shroud of Turin, to meet the person of Jesus Christ. We have come to enter into a personal relationship with the One who takes upon himself our humanity and becomes one of us, so that we in turn might take upon ourselves his divinity and become one with God. Imagine, a God that draws near to us so that we might draw near to him!

All of us who come to view the Shroud of Turin have our own life story. Some are broken, some are confused, some are professed unbelievers, some need to have their faith affirmed, and some are seeking to follow the Lord more closely.

Whatever your story, God's tremendous love for us is shown through the passion of Jesus, who alone offers us the gift of salvation and eternal life. It is this love that is graphically illustrated for us on the shroud.

Before the shroud today, and each day of your life, enter into the silence of your heart. Lay aside all cares of daily life and recognize that God seeks to tell you that you are loved. Be still and know that God is real; God is present. Let your hearts be moved by the immensity of Jesus' love as is plainly made visible on the shroud before you.

Pray for guidance and healing, peace, hope and consolation. Let your heart praise him, worship him, and rejoice in him.

But do not let your experience end there.

The Joy of the Gospel, the call to evangelize

We are constantly reminded by Pope Francis of the joy of being Christian," who writes "the Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his

offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew” (Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 1).

Having discovered the joy of the gospel for ourselves, let us accept the invitation of Jesus Christ to carry on his work in the Church and in the world to evangelize, that is, to tell others of the joy of the gospel. The joy of the gospel is too precious a gift to keep to ourselves! It must be shared!

Let us rediscover our role as missionaries, taking up anew the challenge to preach the Good News of the Gospel Message, starting first in our own families, among friends and neighbours, who anxiously await good news.

A Prayer for the New Evangelization

As we conclude our reflection on the Shroud of Turin and Jesus’ passion, crucifixion, and death upon the cross, let us turn to Mary, Jesus’ mother, and ask her to help us proclaim the message of salvation to all and to enable new disciples to become evangelizers in turn:

(Prayer of Pope Francis for the New Evangelization)

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own “yes”
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.*

*Filled with Christ’s presence,
you brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him exult in the womb of his mother.
Brimming over with joy,
you sang of the great things done by God.
Standing at the foot of the cross
with unyielding faith,
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.*

*Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.*

*Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom.*

*Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.*

*Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.*

Amen. Alleluia!

Come and see!