

lieved.» But that, as St. John makes clear, brings with it no special blessing (20:29) — rather special responsibility (17:18-21) That «special responsibility» is to get beyond the linen to the Lord — to see Him in the faces of the dispossessed, the victims of injustice, the poor, the neglected and all the others for whom He died. «Facts» learned about the Man of the Shroud do not guarantee dedicated service in His Name, Alas, these «facts» can become nothing more than religious erudition in pious garb unless they lead to the deepening of the student's own faith reflected in concern for and service to those for whom the Man of the Shroud came to minister.

All of us who are called to the apostolate of the Holy Shroud have an obligation to get beyond the linen to the Lord whose Image it bears. Thus, we have a mandate to look beyond the limitations of the present to the fullness of the possibilities for the future. Greater ecumenical cooperation and participation is the wave of the future, and all Christians — especially those of us with this privileged ministry of the Holy Shroud — should be prepared to offer their special «gift» to the larger Church family when the occasion permits.

Even before Turin and others like Emanuela Marinelli and the Jacksons had established links with the Russian Orthodox, the following quote from two of their monks appeared in an issue of Diakonia:

...anything which God lifts up to inspire our search for inner truth commands our veneration. If the Holy Shroud lifts us up to a sincere search for God, it becomes an icon. In this sense, we might be so bold as to say that the crucial question about the Shroud, which must pass beyond the Shroud and touch on the power of the resurrection itself, makes its historical authenticity secondary. We must take great care, then, not to join with those who hate the spiritual and unwisely condemn something that God, in His wisdom, may have set forth to wake a sleeping people.

It is not by chance that God has chosen the 21st century with its great technological revolution to be the chosen vehicle for revealing some of the mysteries of the Holy Shroud. Ironically, the very rational empiricism responsible for sophisticated skepticism and agnosticism is being used by God to «convert» former non-believers. Countless stories can be told of those who «came to scoff, but stayed to pray» in their investigation of the Shroud. Recent word from India tells us of amazement on the part of Hindus and Buddhists that Christianity is willing to submit its most precious relic to rigorous scientific investigation. Neither of

these faiths can offer anything for such empirical scrutiny.


We who are part of the «Shroud Crowd» do not have to be convinced of the power of this Fifth Gospel. However, unless we take steps to insure continuing sindonological research and promulgation of the Shroud's many truths for future generations, we run the risk of having our great «treasure» buried under apathy and neglect. Unfortunately, history records that many a shroud group has come and gone over the years. Who will bear the banner of our holy apostolate for future generations of English-speaking devotees? My own fervent prayer is that a full-fledged university, complete with a seminary which serves either or both Roman Catholic and Protestant students as well as the larger undergraduate body, will step forward to provide both the permanency and prestige required of such a program.

But, and this is a very crucial «but», without careful planning at this moment in history our fondest dreams may be reduced to dust. As one old saw states it so well, «God provides the inspiration, but he expects man to supply the perspiration.» In a more theological vein, God has abundantly provided His prevenient grace; we are now being asked to respond with our own cooperating grace. The current group of scientists whom God has used to provide so many insights about the Shroud will eventually «lose interest» after the last test results are printed in their professional journals. Oddly enough, the very confirmation of a 1st century date by C-14 testing may result in diminished interest and/or the widely-rumored decision by the Church to inhibit further testing. At best, the scientists can give us only a probability figure that the Man of the Shroud was an historical personage named Jesus of Nazareth. As there is no laboratory test for «divinity», they can never tell us that this Son of Man was also the Son of God — our Lord and Saviour the Christ. The latter Gospel is known only to the eyes and hearts of Faith. It is we — the members of the Church — who are called upon by God to proclaim the eternal meaning and divine purpose of the Holy Shroud long after the hard, empirical data which it yields has been filed and forgotten by the scientific community.

Now, when the time is right, God has called us to be «conservatives» in the best sense of that word. We are called to conserve, preserve, and promulgate the essential message of the Holy Shroud for future generations — moving them beyond the linen to the Lord.

The Reverend Albert R. Dreisbach

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an act is pure love. An act of pure and selfless giving brings happiness to all.

«Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.»

Peacemakers not only live peaceful lives but also try to bring peace and friendship to others, and to preserve peace between God and man. St. Gregory of Nyssa calls a peacemaker a man who brings peace to another; but one cannot give another what one does not possess oneself. Hence the Lord wants you first to be yourself filled with the blessings of peace and then to communicate it to those who have need of it. By imitating God's love of man, the peacemakers become children of God.

«Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.»

Jesus said many times that those who follow Him will be persecuted. «If they persecute me, they will persecute you» (John 15:20-21). Stephen, Peter and Paul, nearly all of the Apostles, and many Christians in the Roman era suffered martyrdom. The twentieth century with its two World Wars and endless regional conflicts has seen its share of martyrs such as Maximilian Kolbe, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the Central American martyrs. But the Lord promised those that suffer for his sake will be rewarded with the Kingdom of Heaven!



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