

THE SHROUD'S NEW CUSTODIAN

For the information of members, the full text of the Vatican Press release regarding the appointment of Archbishop Saldarini as new custodian of the Shroud, and the encouragement of new scientific examination of the Shroud, has been kindly translated from the Italian by Noel Curren-Briggs. This was issued on Saturday 18 August of last year and reads as follows:

The Holy Father, in accordance with the manifest wish of His Eminence Cardinal Anastasio Alberto Ballestrero, has transferred the task of papal custodian for the conservation and cult of the Holy Shroud to His Excellency Mgr. Giovanni Saldarini, Archbishop of Turin

Declaration by the Director of the Press Office of the Holy See:

On the occasion of the formal transfer of the responsibility for the care and cult of the Holy Shroud from Cardinal Ballestrero to Mgr. Saldarini, the new Archbishop of Turin, one is reminded of the recent events connected with the Holy Shroud, preserved in Turin Cathedral.

We are reminded of the great exposition of the Holy Shroud in 1978 when millions of the faithful came to venerate it, and which gave rise to a number of objective and free investigations by numerous experts, all of which were published in relevant scientific journals.

In 1988, in accordance with the policy of allowing objective examinations by competent experts, the Holy Cloth was dated by the radiocarbon method. Cardinal Ballestrero announced the results found by the laboratories undertaking this task, which were unanimously of the opinion that the cloth was of mediaeval origin. He declared at the same time that it was not a question of faith, but only a scientific matter, whose value in no way altered the veneration due to the Holy Shroud.

The result of the mediaeval dating had to be considered as one element in the context of the results of preceding examinations, which did not contradict the belief that the cloth might be 2,000 years old. This was a matter of one experiment among many, with the same validity attached to it as to any of the other data found by previous experiments, and must be regarded in the framework of a multi-disciplinary set of experiments that have already taken place.

On the scientific and technical level, the Cardinal went on to say, the Shroud poses problems which are still far from being solved. The way in which the image was formed is still a mystery, and in consequence makes it difficult to know how best to conserve the cloth. In future, as in the past, the Church will be ready to consider any serious and competent proposal to examine the Shroud without imposing any conditions other than that it shall not be damaged, and which can be carried out in conjunction with such experiments as have already been undertaken.

Cardinal Ballestrero leaves the new custodian a tradition of open, rigorous and objective research. We extend to his successor our best wishes and express our lively gratitude to the Cardinal for his impartial judgment and actions, and for the obvious care he has taken in the exercise of his charge.