

Name: Laura Clark, Author and Blogger, U.S.A.

Questions:

1. **When** and **how** did you first hear about the Shroud?

In 1997 I saw a news report on the Shroud and the newscaster was talking about blood on the cloth. He posed the question as to whether or not we could clone Jesus Christ at some point in the future. Although impossible scientifically, metaphorically this notion captivated me and led me to start thinking about the Shroud as it might relate to the Second Coming of Christ. As a Catholic, I had only vaguely heard about the relic, but I really knew nothing about it.

2. What interested you about the Shroud?

Its history, its mystery, its possibilities, its unique qualities and its compelling combination of torturous suffering and absolute calm.

3. Do you believe the Shroud is likely the burial cloth of Jesus Christ, a fake relic, or are you uncertain what to believe?

Emphatically yes, I believe it is the burial cloth of Jesus Christ. And I did from the start. My belief comes from an intuitive place of faith (because I am not a scientist). However, the majority of the science I researched reinforced my belief. I never believed that the carbon dating results were accurate, even though I did not know (until 2009) that those results had essentially been refuted (by the work of Benford and Marino). I think the carbon dating results were an anomaly and, hopefully, the test can be redone.

4. What, if any, actions did you take after you first encountered the Shroud (e.g., conduct research, contact people involved with it, etc.)?

In 2000 I took a 24 hour train ride from Frankfurt to Turin, hoping to see the relic but was sorely disappointed to learn that the exhibition had ended shortly before my arrival. I was like a crazy person knocking on the back door of the cathedral asking the priest if I could please see it. I had not yet begun my research, so I had no idea how locked down and heavily secured it was. He directed me to the Museo Della Sindone (museum), where I spent a couple of days studying the exhibits and learning as much as I possibly could. I bought some books and videos and was eager to really sink my teeth into researching it (for the screenplay I wanted to write) but my job was taking me all over the world and I never had the time to devote to it. Still, the Shroud became something of a silent obsession for me.

In 2004 I finally had the time to research it and write my screenplay. I cannot

explain why, but I confined my research to books, pamphlets and videotapes rather than using the Internet. It took me 6 months to write the story and I rarely went a day without working on it (which shocked me because, up to that point, I was a very undisciplined writer). Then, once the screenplay was completed I, oddly, did absolutely nothing with it. Five years passed, and in those years I kept having feelings of nagging guilt that I wasn't doing anything with it.

In 2009 I saw an article online that had a title something like: "Shroud of Turin Mystery Solved" and I immediately felt immense regret that I never did anything with my screenplay. Once I read the article and realized it was just a journalist's use of a catchy headline (the article was about the Knights Templar having guarded the Shroud), I firmly resolved to publish my story.

But still doubt plagued me because the premise was controversial and I certainly had no desire to put something out into the world that would in any way be misconstrued as sacrilegious regarding the Shroud. I decided to get spiritual advice and called my cousin, who had been in the seminary as a Jesuit. He reassured me that, often when God wants us to do something, we are first tested to make sure our resolve is pure. I knew mine was so I went ahead with it.

What was ironic was that, until I checked to see if anything new had been in the news about the Shroud (during my 5 year gap when I paid no attention to it), I had no idea it was going to be on exhibition again in 2010.

5. Have you ever seen the Shroud at any of the exhibitions? If yes, which years?

Yes, 2010. After having to cancel my scheduled trip due to the volcanic ash, I re-booked and made my way to Turin. I spent 20 hours in its presence. I made 5 of the close up viewings and spent the rest of the time sitting in the chapel with it. I got to see it twice when the chapel lights were on (during early morning and night mass) and was able to see the straw color, which was not evident when the Shroud was lit and it looked light gray). And I got to witness droves of people from all over the world who came to see it and I had the impression that they too were mesmerized by the Shroud.

6. What did you experience when you were in the presence of the Shroud?

I had the unexpected experience of realizing I was without a frame of reference because it was unlike *anything* I have ever seen. I tried to make comparisons to cave paintings, other relics, photographs, drawings, even alien-like imaginings...but nothing came close to it. I filled a notebook with thoughts, emotions, and sketches while in its presence.

I was astonished by its serenity. I was moved to a place of absolute fear and

trembling by the wounds on the back of the figure. I have never felt so at home in myself as I did while in the presence of the Shroud. And I was very struck by how completely different it is from other Christian relics, icons, paintings, sculptures, etc. The Shroud is humble, not ornate. It is simple, not flashy. It is meager, not opulent. It is unassuming, yet it has such a powerful and calm presence. The figure is poised and composed in integrity, as though it is quietly standing guard at the gates of redemption and is waiting for us to simply knock on the door to enter.

And when my time with it was up, I had to say what seemed to me to be an impossible good-bye (not knowing when or if it will be on exhibition again in my lifetime).

7. Have you ever been involved in any scientific study of the Shroud? If yes, please describe **what motivated** your work and **why**.

No, I have only read about a lot of it. But I actively churn the ideas and research of others and ask a lot of science-related questions about it in my blog.

8. Have you ever written anything about the Shroud, either factual or fictitious? If yes, please describe **what motivated** your work and **why**.

Yes, the aforementioned fictitious screenplay (that I published as a book) and my blog.

What motivated me to write and publish the screenplay was a knowing that I absolutely must write it because I would never rest until I did. I also had a deep desire to explore the lack of separation between life and death. For me, the image on the Shroud is not only a record of the crucifixion and an imprint of a deceased man, but also the image is, in and of itself, a "living" entity (though not by any of the standards we normally attribute to life). I wanted to connect a human voice to this living energy/image, one that was closely tied to the divine Christ.

The blog was motivated by my desire to allow my fictitious character to create a kind of "Shroud think tank" (thereby giving me the freedom to go way out on a limb in my reflections and questioning). I felt a strong need to give my protagonist permission to live beyond the pages of the book and to keep him engaged, as an abstract/intuitive voice, in the ongoing Shroud conversation.

9. Do you favor or believe any of the current theories on how the image got onto the cloth? If so please name the theory.

I believe the image on the Shroud is Christ's swan song to the gravitational force. The image is His last trace of mass before He is risen into light. How that happened will likely never be proven, but I believe it probably was some combination of free will, a burst of radiation, "weak dematerialization" or perhaps

something akin to divine bioluminescence when He became light, (where little or no heat was produced when the blast occurred, hence leaving the tomb intact).

I greatly value the work of the STURP team and all those who have contributed to understanding the image. I am especially intrigued by Dr. Soons' work and the work of physicists, such as Isabel Piczek and Thaddeus Trenn.

I definitely believe the image was formed as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and is a record of that process, whatever it is, that allowed Him to defy the principles of physics that we rely on to explain our existence.

10. Do you feel that you have a calling or vocation to be involved somehow with the Shroud? If yes, please describe **what motivated** you to make a commitment to the Shroud and **why**.

Yes, I do experience it as a calling and it is always evolving. What motivates me to make a commitment to the Shroud is that I believe it holds all the secrets about God, life, death, oneness, unity and attainable peace. And I think Christ left it behind so that we would be inspired to give our faith a place of reckoning that goes way beyond the other struggles, suffering, tests and challenges we face.

I have also had the privilege of getting to know people like Joe Marino and Barrie Schwartz, who have been involved with the Shroud for a long time and have made incredible contributions. They have both inspired me to keep the Shroud in the forefront of my life.

As for the "Why?" – The Shroud has become an integral part of my life and I could not dismiss it even if I wanted to. I feel inextricably bound to it. What I find startling is that so many people in the world, including many Christians, have either never heard of the Shroud or have never considered it to be of any value or interest to them. Yet, every time I have the opportunity to talk to people about it, I can see their eyes flicker with curiosity.

The Shroud's story and intrigue unfolds in multiple layers and is a place where we can examine human suffering from a variety of perspectives. I used to doubt that I had anything worthwhile to contribute, but then I realized that no matter what one's relationship to the Shroud is, it creates a space for each of us to have the freedom to become the most of who we can be. So, for me, that is in the visceral realm of intuition and abstract thinking and writing. Plus... it is just good fun to contemplate the Shroud.

Perhaps the image on the Shroud is one way Christ lives inside us. I am fascinated by the mix of people from all over the world who gravitate to the Shroud, for so many different reasons, and lend their expertise and creative thinking to it and devote years of their lives to it. In this way, the Shroud unites believers and skeptics alike.

Please describe below any other *personal* stories, experiences, insights, or thoughts about the Shroud of Turin that you would like to share.

The most interesting slant on my story relates to the irony that, while my book sat on the shelf unpublished, I went through 5 consecutive years of almost constant personal suffering. I spent a lot of time contemplating why we must suffer (and, frankly, disagreeing with it!). I very much believe that Christ wanted us to have some reassurance that our suffering has meaning and value and that our existence is so much more vast than we realize. Thus, He left behind, not only a meticulous record of His own suffering, but also an image of hope for us.

At the same time, the Shroud affords us the experience of humility. It is *because* no one has proven how the image got onto the cloth or has been able to reproduce it that we stand before it as human, fallible...but also very creative and eager. The Shroud gives us all the opportunity to extend ourselves beyond our perceived parameters and to take some risks with our thinking, writing, research, and experimentation. The Shroud launches us "out-of-the-human box" and into a deeper mystery to contemplate and perhaps, someday, to solve.

For me, the Shroud is our greatest gift because it fuses science and religion and calls us to use our faith in both to connect with and strengthen our faith in God.

Writings/Websites/Blogs:

Book: [Sindone, The Divine Remedy](#)

Blog: www.divineremedy.org