

# The Holy Fire and the Divine Photography: The Image of the Holy Shroud of Christ

By Robert Siefker

Only once is it recorded that Jesus was asked to perform a miracle simply to provide a “sign”. Jesus had a very pointed and critical response to this request. His response is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew: *“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying ‘Teacher, we would like to see a sign from you.’ But he replied to them: ‘An evil and unfaithful generation asks for a sign! The only sign it will be given is the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster for three days and three nights, so will the son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights’”*. (Mt: 12:38-41)

The new book, *The Holy Fire and the Divine Photography: The Image of the Holy Shroud of Christ*, written under the leadership of Giulio Fanti, zeros in on two profound signs that conform with the sign given to the prophet Jonah. These two signs given to mankind, each in its own way, point to the *Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*. But beyond that, new evidence shows how these two actual material signs link up in a way that is startling and as the evidence becomes more broadly known, world changing.

First, there is the miraculous religious event known as the *Ceremony of the Miracle of the Holy Fire*. This ceremony occurs in Jerusalem every year in a very special spot – at the burial tomb of Jesus of Nazareth in the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre. Furthermore, this sign is given on a very special day: Orthodox Holy Saturday, the day before Orthodox Easter. The second sign pointing to the *Resurrection* is the *Shroud of Turin*. First, we will take a deeper look at the first sign which is less widely known in the western world, the *Ceremony of the Miracle of the Holy Fire*.



On the **Left**, the Patriarch is leaving the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre with his miraculously ignited candles. On the **Right** is the Rotunda of the church with pilgrims receiving the **Holy Fire** on their candles on Orthodox Holy Saturday.

The *Ceremony of the Miracle of the Holy Fire* is led by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, or his appointee. The new book records the following information about this miraculous event:

1. The first activity on Holy Saturday morning is the preparation for the ceremony in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. This preparation includes extinguishing all the vigil lamps in the Edicule as well as in the surrounding areas of the Holy Sepulchre Church, including the overlooking gallery areas. This usually occurs before 10 a.m. in the morning.
2. Next, the Edicule is inspected three (3) different times by a Moslem guard assigned to the Holy Sepulchre Church who is accompanied by Armenian, Coptic and Jacobite clergy. The purpose of the inspection is to verify that there is nothing in either chamber of the Edicule that might be used to light a flame, and to see that every lamp in the Edicule is extinguished. The search starts around 10 a.m. and lasts for about an hour.
3. At 11 a.m., after the thorough search of the Edicule is completed, the door of the Edicule is sealed by the Moslem guard, who according to traditional practice, places and knots a white ribbon around the two handles of the entrance door of the Edicule and seals the knot of the ribbon with wax.
4. Also, around 11 a.m. Christian Arabs, who are part of the large crowd in the Holy Sepulchre Church surrounding the Edicule, begin singing traditional songs. It is often a raucous event where there is the hoisting of young men up on shoulders and the shouting of religious slogans.
5. At noon the Greek Orthodox Patriarch who will conduct the *Holy Fire* service enters the Orthodox Chapel of the Resurrection and is seated on the Patriarchal Throne. The Armenian, Coptic and Jacobite clerical representatives then present themselves to the Patriarch, kiss his hand, and ask his permission to receive the *Holy Fire* when the Patriarch brings the *Holy Fire* out of the burial chamber.
6. At approximately 12:30 p.m. the Patriarch, now fully vested in his ceremonial attire, approaches the outside of the Edicule and begins a procession that will go around the Edicule three (3) times. The Patriarch is followed by his Bishops and other participating clergy. During the procession around the Edicule, songs are sung by a choir.
7. After completing the procession, the Patriarch stops in front of the Edicule and the other clergy continue ahead, leaving the Patriarch alone to approach the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre. There, he is joined by the Armenian bishop and various secular officials. The Patriarch then removes his ornate vestments and mitre, being left



*Edicule in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem. Photo by Dan Lindberg.*

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wearing only a simple and humble white tunic. Then he submits to being searched by the secular authorities. These officials generally include a chief city official of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem Chief of Police. They verify that the Patriarch is not carrying any matches or devices which might be used to light a candle.

8. Next, after being handed four new and unlit bundles of 33 candles which will be used to distribute the *Holy Fire* to the attending faithful, the Patriarch enters the Tomb. He is followed by the Armenian representative, who has the traditional right to be present, but only in the antechamber. From there he can observe the Patriarch praying and receiving the *Holy Fire*. It is also at approximately this time that pilgrims attending the service report seeing electromagnetic phenomena, often described as series of “trains of lightning” outside of the Edicule.
9. Finally, now alone within the tomb chamber, the Patriarch recites the traditional prayer beseeching the coming of the *Holy Fire* . . . and then he waits!

Here is a very important firsthand description of the Ceremony recorded in an interview, given during Holy Week in 1998 by Danish scholar Niels Christian Hvidt of the then Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Diodorus. Diodorus served as the Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1980 until 2000. At the time of the interview Diodorus had conducted the service of the Holy Fire for well over a decade and a half. Here are his words:

*“After all the lights are extinguished (in the Holy Sepulchre), I bow down and enter the first chamber of the tomb. From here I find my way through the darkness to the inner room of the tomb where Christ was buried. Here, I kneel in holy fear and . . . I say certain prayers that have been handed down to us through the centuries and, having said them, I wait.*

*Sometimes I may wait a few minutes, but normally the miracle happens immediately after I have said the prayers. From the core of the very stone on which Jesus lay, an indefinable light pours forth. It usually has a blue tint, but the color may change and assume many different hues. It cannot be described in human terms.*

*The light rises out of the stone as mist rises out of a lake; it almost looks as if the stone is covered by a moist cloud, but it's light. This light each year behaves differently. Sometimes it covers just the stone, while other times it gives light to the whole Sepulchre, so that people who stand outside the tomb and look into it (through the side portals of the Edicule) will see it filled with light.*

*The light does not burn. I have never had my beard burnt in all the sixteen years I have been Patriarch in Jerusalem and have received the **Holy Fire**.*

*The light is of a different consistency from normal fire that burns in an oil lamp. At a certain point the light rises and forms a column in which the fire is of a different nature, so that I am able to light my candles from it.*

*When I thus have received the flame on my candles, I go out and give the fire first to the Armenian patriarch and then to the Coptic. Thereafter, I give the flame to all people present in the church . . . We experience many miracles in our churches, and miracles are nothing strange to us . . . But none of these miracles have such a penetrating and symbolic meaning for us as the **Miracle of the Holy Fire**.*

*The miracle is almost like a sacrament. It makes the Resurrection of Christ as real to us (Orthodox Christians) as if it occurred just a few years ago . . . I have been in Jerusalem since 1939 when I came to the city at the age of fifteen. I have attended the ceremony of the **Holy Fire** for all these years and have thus been a witness to the miracle sixty-one times. For me it is not a question of whether I believe in the miracle or not. . . **I know it is true!**”*

The reason the *Miracle of the Holy Fire* is basically unknown in the Western World today is due to the split between eastern and western Christians in 1054. That split between Catholic and Orthodox Christians is referred to as the “*Great Schism*”, or the “*Schism of 1054*”. Nevertheless, after the break between Catholic and Orthodox Christians there remained a significant memory among all non-Orthodox Christians, including Roman Catholics, of the *Miracle of the Holy Fire*. Indeed, western Catholic pilgrims continued to visit Jerusalem each year to attend the ceremony of the *Miracle of the Holy Fire* at the tomb of Jesus. The real separation, East and West, with respect to the *Miracle of the Holy Fire* would not come until almost two hundred years later, in the year 1238. The turning of the back to the *Miracle of the Holy Fire* by Catholic Christians was precipitated by Pope Gregory IX in the year 1238.



Pope Gregory IX

Pope Gregory IX, who served as the Pope of the Catholic Church between 19 March 1227 and 22 August 1241, took a totally different track regarding The *Miracle of the Holy Fire* than did the two remarkable leaders, Pope Urban II and the famous Muslim leader, Saladin. Pope Urban II had used the tradition of the appearance of the *Miracle of the Holy Fire* to help promote the First Crusade in the hope of reuniting Western and Eastern Christians. Saladin took the initiative to personally attend the Ceremony of the *Holy Fire* to inform his judgement regarding the validity of the *Miracle* before he took any negative action regarding the tradition. Pope Gregory IX did neither. In fact, he did just the opposite. He stuck a finger in the eye of Orthodox Christians, unlike Urban II, and made a judgement about the reality of the appearance of *God's Holy Light* in the tomb of Jesus on Holy Saturday without any serious investigation. In a letter reported to have been

signed by Pope Gregory IX, he drew a stark line between Eastern Orthodox believers and Western non-Orthodox Christian believers. Here are his reported words:

*“We understand that the canons of the Sepulchre in Jerusalem say that fire from heaven descends into the Sepulchre on Easter eve . . . Indeed, because the Lord, as we told them does not need our lies, we order anyone who has presumed to believe this, by our authority, never to attend there again.”* (*The Holy Fire and the Divine Photography*, 116)

After the action taken by Pope Gregory IX, memory of the miraculous *Holy Fire* phenomenon began to age out in the Western non-orthodox Churches. Today the vast majority of non-Orthodox Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, have never even heard of the “*Miracle of the Holy Fire*”

In the year 2019, on Orthodox Holy Saturday on April 27, Giulio Fanti, the leading author of the new book that links the *Miracle of the Holy Fire* to the *Shroud of Turin*, was able, through extreme efforts, to be present at the Orthodox led ceremony of the *Holy Fire* at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which is the seat of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem. He observed strange phenomenon outside of the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre just before the Patriarch came out of the Edicule with his candles bearing the *Holy Fire*. He observed dozens of what he described as “*lightning bolt trains*” or various successions of lightning bolts at constant frequencies around 10 Hz. This was shocking but could not actually be considered unusual because attendees at the *Ceremony of the Holy Fire* have reported unusual phenomenon down through the centuries, including those listed below:

- White, blue or violet light
- Flashes of light or lightening
- Rain, dew or snow
- Loud noises or whistles
- Earthquake
- Cloud or smoke
- “Miraculous” relighting of lamps in the church
- “Miraculous” lighting of candles
- Crosses or triangles of light
- Non-Consuming flame



*Giulio Fanti in Jerusalem at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the Service of the **Holy Fire** on April 27, 2019. Holding the candle under his chin, he felt no pain.*

Sometime after his experience of being personally present at the Ceremony of the *Miracle of the Holy Fire* Giulio Fanti was interviewed about his experience, by L.A. Marzulli. Here are key statements from that interview:

**You have been studying the *Holy Fire* for some time now. What drew you to the phenomenon?**

*“It was the Israeli doctor Ishan Salama who contacted me in February 2018 to propose the idea of studying the HF phenomenon and I advised him to do a first preliminary verification experiment during Orthodox Easter 2018. I asked him to compare the burns on a linen fabric of two candles, one lit with common fire, the other with **Holy Fire**.”*

*“Given the exciting results, I decided to attend the **HF** phenomenon in 2019 to also verify the possible correlation of the **Holy Fire energy** with the energy linked to the formation of the body image of the **Holy Shroud** . . . I performed very important experiments that then led me to write the book entitled **The Holy Fire and the Divine Photography** . . . I am personally convinced that it is a great Miracle!”*

### **What exactly is the Holy Fire?**

*“Some Patriarchs in the past have testified that after the prayer, the tombstone is wet with a myrrh-bearing liquid and a **luminous cloud** begins to rise from it, which gradually becomes a real fire. At that very moment, the Patriarch brings his candles close to that flame to light them. Then the Patriarch leaves the Edicule and distributes this **HF** to the faithful.”*

*“Perhaps because of the current conflicts between Catholics and Orthodox, I have heard many Catholic priests affirm with certainty that the Orthodox Patriarch enters the Edicule with matches or lighters to light his candles. And this is what a high Catholic prelate of Jerusalem said at lunch with me when we were talking about this miracle. To him I replied: **‘I am not interested in what enters the Edicule, lighters or matches, I am interested in what comes out: I have personally experienced a cold fire that cannot be reproduced in that environment of the Holy Sepulchre’**. With this answer I silenced him.”*

*“This is a cold fire that stays cold for about ten minutes and then gradually becomes hot like a common fire.”*

### **Describe a characteristic of the Holy Fire that makes you think that it is of miraculous origin?**

*“A miracle, in theology, is an extraordinary event, above the laws of nature, which is considered to be operated by God directly or indirectly. In the case of the **Holy Fire**, a phenomenon that has been repeated for more than a millennium only on Orthodox Holy Saturday and only in the same place of the Edicule, following a particular prayer made by the Patriarch, already appears to be a miraculous event in itself.”*

*“But the scientific demonstration of the fact that the **Holy Fire** is an extraordinary event outside the laws of nature, consists in the observation that this **Holy Fire** remains cold for at least 10 minutes and all pilgrims can personally experience this extraordinary event!”*

*“With this I do not say that it is not possible to produce a **cold fire in the laboratory**, but to do this you must use equipment that is certainly not present in the Holy Sepulchre.”*

*“As a teacher of measurements, I therefore feel I can confirm the miraculous nature of the phenomenon of the **Holy Fire**.”*

### **You attended the ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and experienced the Holy Fire, what was it like?**

*“The **Holy Fire** was brought to me just a few minutes after the Patriarch distributed it to the pilgrims and so I was able to personally experience the extraordinary and unforgettable characteristics of that still cold **Holy Fire**.”*

*“First of all, I experimented it directly on myself and I placed the **Holy Fire** under my beard, as documented by photographs and films; then I also inhaled it with my mouth until it reached my throat, thinking that, like the Eucharist, it could be taken into me. I felt it as a cloud of warm gas, slightly more consistent than the surrounding air, just above body temperature, therefore about 40° C. For the rest, it was also optically similar to a normal fire.”*

*“Subsequently, to the extent that I was allowed, I performed some scientific experiments. Among these, I lit two candles, nominally identical, the one on the left with a common lighter, the one on the right with the **Holy Fire**. A few centimeters above the two flames I placed a piece of linen for a few seconds to see which of the two flames had scorched the piece of the linen first.”*

*“When I saw that the flame of the candle on the left had set fire to the piece of linen, I removed it from the flames, put out the fire and observed what the two flames had produced.”*

*“While the normal fire had set fire to the piece of linen, the candle lit with the **Holy Fire** produced only a slight scorching on the piece of linen . . . A scorching that was also very similar in color to the body image of the **Holy Shroud**.”*

### **Why do you think the Holy Fire is important to Christians everywhere?**

- *“According to Orthodox Bishop Photiki, the **Holy Fire**, also called “**Uncreated Light**” by the Orthodox, is the symbol of the **Resurrection**. I agree with this definition, but I add that if the **Holy Fire** is the symbol of the **Resurrection**, the **Holy Shroud** is the **scientific proof** of the Resurrection. ([http://www.holyfire.org/eng/doc\\_PaschalFireJ2.htm](http://www.holyfire.org/eng/doc_PaschalFireJ2.htm))*
- *“The **Holy Shroud**, the most important Relic of Christianity now preserved in Turin (Italy), shows a double body image of the human body of Jesus Christ, on the front and back of the cloth.”*
- *“The close relationship consists in the hypothesis that the **HF1**, during the Resurrection of Jesus, contributed in an important way to produce the body image imprinted on the Relic. Major Patrick Lublink, postgraduate in Shroud Studies, wrote [2019]:”*
  - *“Given that a possible explanation of the image of the **Shroud** is that it is the result of a low heat scorch and given that the **Holy Fire** was possibly identified as low heat plasma, then the relationship is clear. The phenomenon known as the **Holy Fire** of Jerusalem could and would have been the means by which the image of the **Shroud of Turin** was created.”*
- *“By **combining** the extraordinary information relating to the **Holy Fire** with that of the **Holy Shroud**, everyone will therefore have a clear overview of what happened on Easter Sunday about 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. Jesus’s sign, the sign of Jonah that being in the tomb for three days, seems to be given annually to humanity.”*
- *“Therefore, the **Holy Fire** is the symbol of the Resurrection, the **Holy Shroud**, is the scientific proof of the Resurrection and **combined together** they provide us with **tangible data** of what happened 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. Both **cannot be separated**, and their truths must be spread both to the Eastern and Western world to make it clear, even to the man in the street, that God is close to us and wanted to leave us tangible signs of what will be the **future of our life after death**.”*

## Dating The Shroud

As reported in the new book on the Shroud, *The Holy Fire and the Divine Photography*, the research carried out up to our present day gives undeniably strong evidence that the linen cloth known as the *Shroud of Turin* wrapped the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth after his crucifixion and death. There has been only one significant objection to this conclusion. That contradiction came from the scientists who gained access to perform radiocarbon testing of a limited number of linen fibers cut from the Shroud in 1988. This access was gained after the main body of work on the Shroud by the Shroud of Turin Research Project team of scientists and technicians was completed in Turin. The samples to be carbon dated were taken from the Shroud and sent to three (3) prominent Radiocarbon Testing laboratories:

**University of Oxford, in England**

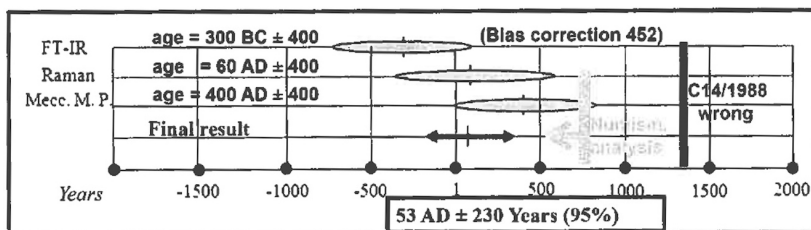
**University of Arizona, in Tucson, Arizona, USA**

**Federal Institute of Technology, in Zurich, Switzerland**

The Director of the Vatican Press Office, M.D. Joaquin Navarro Valls, on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1988, reported that: "...the calibrated Calendar age range assigned to the Shroud cloth with 95% confidence level is from 1260 A.D. to 1390 A.D."

Now, as recorded in the new book, the unreliability of the radiocarbon dating carried out in 1988 has been demonstrated. New studies have confirmed that the Shroud samples used for the carbon dating were cut from next to each other, yet they had very different age results. This shows something very strange was going on. Subsequently, a group of professors of statistics, headed by Marco Riani, concluded that the 1988 radiocarbon dating results are not reliable, but rather are "*scientifically meaningless.*"

As the new book records, the mean of the values from two new chemical dating methods and a mechanical method, indicate that the date of the Shroud is 53 AD  $\pm$  230 years with a confidence level of 95%.



It is important to note that in the diagram above, the three (3) dating methods show a common time interval for dating the tested linen samples taken from the Shroud linen cloth. Note too that the three (3) dating methods all point to a first century AD age for the Shroud linen cloth. As the new book states . . . "*The final result is compatible with the era in which Jesus Christ lived in Palestine.*" This is a potentially world changing result as it becomes known.

## The Image on the Shroud: The Divine Photography Hypothesis

The new book on the Shroud presents a detailed hypothesis developed by Giulio Fanti to answer the question regarding the source of the complex body image and the various blood stains on the Shroud. Fanti names his hypothesis *THE DIVINE PHOTOGRAPHY HYPOTHESIS*. For the development of this hypothesis Fanti draws on the hypothesis developed by John Jackson, a PhD in physics and the head of the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP) conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Jackson's hypothesis is called the *FALL-THROUGH HYPOTHESIS* (<http://shroudofturin.com/>). The hypothesis is that the body wrapped in the Shroud became radiant with energy (*Holy Fire*) and at the same time, the body became mechanically transparent which allowed the Shroud to fall through the radiant body as a result of gravity, leaving the image and the various blood stains on the Shroud cloth. Fanti embraces Jackson's hypothesis but recommends that Jackson study, and also embrace the importance of the role of the *Maillard Reaction* which is embraced by Fanti in the new book.

Most important, in summation, is that Jackson adds the *Fall-Through Hypothesis* and Fanti adds the miraculous energy source – the *Holy Fire*, that appears every year at the place of the resurrection of Jesus, in the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre on Orthodox Holy Saturday.



***The Miraculous Image on  
the Shroud of Turin:  
God is the artist –  
the Holy Fire is  
God's instrument!***

*Three-dimensional processing of the  
face of Jesus of the Shroud based on  
the degree of coloration in the image.  
(Mario Azevedo)*

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