

Shroud: conservation, monitoring and fruition technologies

Workshop at the Turin Polytechnic for the 60th anniversary of the International Center for Studies on the Shroud

Published 20/06/2019

The Shroud is a continuous challenge for science. And the new frontier of research aims today at technologies for the conservation, monitoring and use of the cloth. Because, beyond the question of authenticity and of the scientific research itself on the formation of its imprint, the Shroud is first of all a precious and fragile find that must be protected from the risks of degradation to deliver it to the generations of tomorrow. This was the main topic on the agenda of the Annual Meeting of the International Center for Studies on the Shroud, held from June 14th to 16th 2019 and punctuated by meetings and scientific debates, to remember, in the sixtieth year of activity of the Center, the character above all scientific of his contribution to the studies on the Linen.

Arriving from Spain, France, Germany, Great Britain, as well as from all over Italy, and also in direct connection from the United States, the CISS science men had first of all the opportunity to take stock of the knowledge concerning the Sheet at the Polytechnic of Turin, during the workshop "Technologies for the preservation, monitoring and use of the Shroud", an operational table, open since Friday afternoon 14 at the Sala delle Cacce in the Castello del Valentino. Here during a lively exchange of information and ideas with the Politecnico professors, the fabric, the imprint, the blood stains and the possible factors of degradation were analyzed. All in order to identify the guidelines for possible future interventions in order to eventually implement the conservation system in the light of continuous technological innovation, which was shared in any case to respond to all current protection needs at the time.

The Shroud, famous linen woven in a herringbone pattern, according to tradition, would have wrapped the body of Christ deposed from the cross. The Church underlines its spiritual and devotional importance, being, as he said s. John Paul II "mirror of the Gospel", in that the sufferings imprinted on the fabric are in absolute harmony with the narration of the Passion and death of Christ that is read in the Gospels.

"The Shroud is a relic of extraordinary historical and spiritual value, object of devotion for hundreds of years," notes Professor Gian Maria Zaccone, historian and director of the CISS. "Beyond the scientific question of the origin of the imprint and its belonging or not to the funerary equipment of Christ, it presents itself as a very complex and certainly unique object. The priority today is therefore to deliver this treasure intact to devotion and to future history ».

«Three open fronts to respond to the challenge and the same number of strategies to identify and translate into action. First of all it is essential to monitor, with the acquisition of a reference image, what is called the forensic image, "observes Professor Nello Balossino, also the deputy director of the CISS.

A motorized-robotic image (for example by means of complete multispectral scans) would be useful to inspect specific micro-sections of the sheet, together with verification of potential biological attacks to avert any harmful contamination for the fabric.

Since its appearance in 1353 in the village of Lirey, the Shroud has immediately established itself as a public object, to watch and therefore to show. And in fact the expositions have marked the history from the Middle Ages to today. Intense moments, a lever of devotion, but in which we must not let our guard down on the need to protect the find. Therefore the fruition, which has to do directly with the expositions and their modalities, should be carefully evaluated with the cloth vertically - as per tradition - or horizontally, according to the appreciated formula of the extraordinary veneration of the Linen for young people, in August 2018. All analyzing also the specific routes and identifying lighting solutions, at very low light, therefore extremely respectful of the integrity of the cloth, but always uniform and in line, with regards to color and definition of the footprint, with expectations of the public.

Saturday and Sunday, work continued on the annual assembly of the CISS Scientific Committee, composed of scientists from all over the world, where the medical-legal issues related to the study of the Shroud were addressed in particular. Sunday morning the meeting ended with a visit to the reborn Cappella della Sindone, with the careful and precious guide of the architect Marina Feroggio, director of the restoration.