

5. **The Shroud is also an image of God's love as well as of human sin.** It invites us to rediscover the ultimate reason for Jesus' redeeming death. In the comparable suffering that it documents, the love of the One who "so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16) is made almost tangible and reveals its astonishing dimensions. In its presence believers can only exclaim in all truth: "Lord, you could not love me more!" and immediately realize that sin is responsible for that suffering: the sins of every human being.

As it speaks to us of love and sin, the Shroud invites us all to impress upon our spirit the face of God's love, to remove from it the tremendous reality of sin. Contemplation of that tortured Body helps contemporary man to free himself from the superficiality of the selfishness with which he frequently treats love and sin. Echoing the word of God and centuries of Christian consciousness, the Shroud whispers: believe in God's love, the greatest treasure given to humanity, and flee from sin, the greatest misfortune in history.

6. **The Shroud is also an image of powerlessness:** the powerlessness of death, in which the ultimate consequence of the mystery of the Incarnation is revealed. The burial cloth spurs us to measure ourselves against the most troubling aspect of the mystery of the Incarnation, which is also the one that shows with how much truth God truly became man, taking on our condition in all things, except sin. Everyone is shaken by the thought that not even the Son of God withstood the power of death, but we are all moved at the thought that He so shared our human condition as willingly to subject himself to the total powerlessness of the moment when life is spent. It is the experience of Holy Saturday, an important stage on Jesus' path to glory, from which a ray of light shines on the sorrow and death of every person. By reminding us of Christ's victory, faith gives us the certainty that the grave is not the ultimate goal of existence. God calls us to resurrection and immortal life.

7. **The Shroud is an image of silence.** There is a tragic silence of incommunicability, which finds its greatest expression in death, and there is the silence of fruitfulness, which belongs to whoever refrains from being heard outwardly in order to delve to the roots of truth and life. The Shroud expresses not only the silence of death but also the courageous and fruitful silence of triumph over the transitory, through the total immersion in God's eternal presence. It thus offers a moving confirmation of the fact that the merciful omnipotence of our God is not restrained by any power of evil, but knows instead how to make the very power of evil contribute to good. Our age needs to rediscover the fruitfulness of silence, in order to overcome the dissipation of sounds, images and chatter that too often prevent the voice of God from being heard.

8. Dear Brothers and Sisters, your Archbishop, dear Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini, the Pontifical Guardian of the Holy Shroud, has offered the following words as the motto of this Solemn Exposition"
"All will see your salvation". Yes, the pilgrimage that great throngs are making to this city is precisely a "coming to see" this tragic and enlightening sign of the Passion, which proclaims the Redeemer's love. This icon of Christ abandoned in the dramatic and solemn state of death, which for centuries has been the subject of significant representations and for 100 years, thanks to photography, has been so frequently reproduced, urges us to go to the heart of the mystery of life and death, to discover the great and consoling message it has left us.

The Shroud shows us Jesus at the moment of his greatest helplessness and reminds us that in the abasement of that death lies the salvation of the whole world. The Shroud thus becomes an invitation to face every experience, including that of suffering and extreme helplessness, with the attitude of those who believe that God's merciful love overcomes every poverty, every limitation, every temptation to despair.

May the Spirit of God, who dwells in our hearts, instill in everyone the desire and generosity necessary for accepting the Shroud's message and for making it the decisive inspiration of our lives.