



## Shroud of Turin goes on display for first time in decade

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**The city of Turin rolled out the red carpet Saturday as the Shroud of Turin, believed by many to be the burial cloth of Jesus Christ, went on public display for the first time in a decade.**

Some two million people are expected to view one of the most revered relics in Christendom - and among the most disputed - over the next six weeks in this northern Italian city.

A soldier in full dress regalia stood motionless on guard as hundreds of journalists and photographers were offered a first chance to view the cloth.

A large area around the Turin cathedral has been cordoned off and scores of volunteers were on hand from a total of some 4,000 retired elite mountain warfare soldiers sporting the plumed felt caps of their corps, Gli Alpini (Alpines).

A nearby tent city offered ice cream and specialities of Turin's Piedmont region, as well as emergency services.

Special parking areas have been designated for coaches bringing pilgrims for their chance to spend a few minutes before the relic, framed by red drapery and backlit to provide the best possible view.

The Shroud of Turin, which was painstakingly restored in 2002, measures 4.4 by 1.1 metres (14.3 by 3.7 feet) and is said to have been imprinted with an image of Christ's body, notably his face.

It was discovered in the French city of Troyes, southeast of Paris, in the mid-14th century.

A section missing from the upper righthand corner of the fabric was used for radiocarbon dating analysis in 1988, when samples were sent to four different labs.

The analysis determined that the fibres in the cloth date from the Middle Ages, sometime between 1260 and 1390, but those findings have in turn been challenged.

Pope Benedict XVI will pay homage to the shroud on May 2.

The relic last went on public display in 2000 on the occasion of the Roman Catholic Church's World Youth Days, held that year in Rome.

Pope Benedict said his visit would be "a propitious occasion to contemplate this mysterious visage that speaks silently to the heart of men, inviting them to recognise the face of God."

The Vatican has never pronounced on the authenticity of the shroud.

Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti, president of the Turin archdiocese's Commission on the Shroud, has called it an "instrument of evangelisation."

The viewing runs through May 23.

Normally visitors to the cathedral can only view a lifesize reproduction of the shroud.

- AFP

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