

Why is the Shroud Important?

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One can read about the Shroud for free at ShroudNM.com, Shroud.com or Shroud3D.com, among many of the other reputable websites. You can buy books on the subjects by experts in their fields of study and work by the likes of Ian Wilson, John Heller, Alan Alder and many others and listen to presentations to get the information you desire. There's a plethora of useful information out there, far more than there used to be when Barrie Schwartz first started Shroud.com in 1996. Obviously unless you read about a subject, you cannot have an opinion on it. So what? I think the most important thing about the Shroud is its meaning and most importantly, the effect it has had on the lives of those who studied it.

I have met and spoken to Barrie Schwartz, the Documenting Photographer on the 1978 STURP team who is a Jew about the effects it has had on his life. In Barrie's words to me, which he has also said publicly, his study of the Shroud restored his faith in God. According to Barrie, the Shroud isn't just for Christians. The Shroud is for everyone.

My good friend Pete Schumacher was the Production Engineer of the VP8 Image Analyzer, an analog computer which revealed in a visual way for the first time in 1976 the brightness map encoded on it. Nothing else in the world has these properties which we are not advanced enough to create or duplicate. He met the Shroud in 1976 when he delivered a unit, then \$25,000 to Eric Jumper's basement. After he set it up and they processed an image of the Shroud through it, they saw a 3-dimensional image of a man's face in the correct proportions. Pete said, "What's that," to which came the reply, "the Shroud of Turin." Pete replied, "What's that?" Over his 35 years he has been changed and is a deacon in the Catholic Church partly due to his experiences with the Shroud.

Yet, while I can relate some things I know about the effect of the study of this holy icon on my two friends, I can much better relate what happened to me. Sometime around January/February 2009, Pete was showing me the VP8 Image Analyzer for the first time in my life. He was busy explaining all the technical stuff and what it did, but it all had no meaning to me. While I had seen 3D photos of what this equipment produced, I wasn't aware it was *this* equipment. He also wanted me to create a webpage for a new museum he started that opened in February 2009. Eventually we got together in August to eat and draw up our plans for the site (you can view this sheet [here](#)).

I created the site from our plans, all of one or two pages with the SEAM pamphlet on it. I created a links page for those who visit and would like to see other pages. But, I didn't know what a reliable Shroud site looked like. There were some that looked interesting, but many Pete would not approve for one reason or another. In some cases, the sites I found did not have reliable information. Realizing I needed to learn, I started working at the museum. I listened to many of Pete's talks and started reading books. He had speakers into the museum from around the world and I would get recommendations from them and started learning and started giving talks at SEAM. My wife realized immediately that I was hooked, meaning it was having a very positive influence on my life. Yet I was the last to realize this.

I found myself desiring to please God. I *wanted* virtue and started to realize how lacking my life is in this important substance of faith. I started to pray more regularly and returned to the praying of the Divine Office - the Liturgy of the Hours that I had done many years prior. Pete suggested I ought to consider becoming a Deacon. I shrugged it off. "I like to be in the background," I offered. The Bishop of our diocese also suggested I ought to pursue it and I offered the same rationale. I really didn't want to be in the public office of Deacon. Heck, I just wanted some more virtue. Then people in the parish started suggesting this to me. When this started happening, I thought I better start to consider that perhaps God was calling and it was not just the fanciful wishes of my good friend and beloved bishop.

I spent a weekend retreat at San Patricio (St. Patrick), NM, driving through the worst ice/snowstorm in recent history of our small town to get there (I was going no matter what). The retreat confirmed God calling me to the Diaconate. Originally to start September 2010, it was postponed till the following year. I waited patiently, editing & expanding upon a presentation started by a home-schooled High School student named Crista which became my passion and when my learning intensified as I contemplated the 14.5 X 3.6 foot full-size Barrie Schwartz color photo in the museum as I gave talks. Some would ask me what I thought about the Shroud which caused me to look within myself & immerse myself deeper in faith and to be touched by the God who loves all people and is calling us all to repentance, forgiveness and love. The Shroud did not give me my faith, but I could see the prophecies in Scripture come alive in this image.

All these activities focused themselves even more as I was involved in Church in activities such as teaching & sponsoring RCIA and doing Scripture study with a group of friends at our Church each year. When I taught I found myself focusing more on the practical aspect of personal holiness no matter what the topic. What does baptism do for us and how are we supposed to respond? What does the Eucharist give to us and what kind of lives should we live? It was becoming for me all about personal holiness and responsibility toward God from whom we come and to whom we are all returning through this life. But my teaching wasn't about other people. I was thinking about myself and what I needed to do, to live in a way pleasing to God no matter what my thoughts, state of life, condition. All that mattered was the call and who God wants me to be.

So my wife and I start the Diaconate program September 16th, 2011. I desire to attend daily Mass and spend time in front of the Eucharistic presence of the Lord. My prayer? "Change me. Make me into what you want me to be, no matter what that is." Will it happen? Of course it will. Not because of me. I am human and fickle. Yet my God is constant, never changing and his call is not revocable. He doesn't take back his word, but sends it forth to accomplish the ends for which he sent it. For any who read this, please keep all who are discerning the Diaconate in your prayers that we please God. It's not important to become or not become a deacon. As I say, if God doesn't want me to be a Deacon, I'll have less work to do. The *only* thing that is important is that I please him in everything. God love you.