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# FATHER SPITZER ANSWERS 18 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SHROUD OF TURIN



Reflections from Father Robert Spitzer, S.J.

# Father Spitzer Answers 18 Questions About the Shroud of Turin

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# Introduction

Are faith, science, and reason compatible? With years of study to back him up, Fr. Robert Spitzer, S.J., the prolific author, educator, and philosopher, answers with a resounding “Yes!”

Fr. Spitzer, who once debated Stephen Hawking on national television regarding God’s existence, wants to share the rational basis of the Catholic Faith with everyone.

This beloved Jesuit priest, who hosts EWTN’s *Father Spitzer’s Universe*, regularly answers questions about a variety of subjects, including suffering, the creation of the universe, reasons for being pro-life, Eucharistic miracles, and much more.

One subject very close to Fr. Spitzer’s heart is the Shroud of Turin. Many people, including Fr. Spitzer, believe this cloth truly covered Jesus in His tomb and was left behind after His Resurrection.

Some people say that the Shroud of Turin cannot be Jesus’ burial cloth, citing carbon dating tests completed in the 1980s that cast doubt on the age of the Shroud. However, more recent studies tell a different story.

In this eBook, Fr. Spitzer answers several questions about the Shroud of Turin, addressing the Shroud’s authenticity, how it can help us better understand the Crucifixion, the age of the Shroud (according to recent scientific testing), its relationship to the Divine Mercy image and the Tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the meaning it holds for every Christian.

## Questions and Answers

### 1. What is the Shroud of Turin?

The Shroud of Turin is a 14-foot-long linen cloth with an image of a crucified man.

Regarding the person whose image is on the Shroud, Fr. Spitzer says,

*Obviously, the man in the Shroud was crucified, but he was crucified in the unique way that Jesus was crucified with Roman weaponry.*

*So it's not a medieval whip that was used to whip this man. It was a Roman flagrum with three strands and pellets at the end of each strand. It wasn't a medieval spear, but it was a Roman legionnaire spear that pierced him between the fifth and the sixth ribs. And of course, out came blood and water. And you can see the pleural fluid and ... also the blood that came out of that wound, which is surrounding the wound there.*

*You can see that the man was definitely pierced through the hands and the feet with a nail. He was crowned with thorns, and there isn't any other example of a crucifixion [where the person also had a crown of thorns]. We have hundreds of good examples of crucifixions ... but none with a crown of thorns.*

*These blood samples look pretty clearly like they are displaying anatomically the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. ...*

*The man [of the Shroud] was clearly crucified in the way of Jesus, and his blood manifests the polytrauma that he would have experienced in the crucifixion event.*

### 2. How many bloodstains are on the Shroud?

“The Shroud of Turin [has] 372 bloodstains,” says Fr. Spitzer. “It has AB blood type, ... human hemoglobin, human immunoglobulins, human whole blood, and a mixture of ferritin and creatinine, which are two enzymes that synthesize during times of heavy polytraumas.”

### 3. How old is the Shroud?

According to recent scientific studies, the Shroud of Turin is roughly 2,000 years old. Even though 1988 carbon testing seemingly indicated the Shroud originated in the Middle Ages, modern tests tell a different story.

Fr. Spitzer says,

*The wide-angle x-ray scattering dating test that was performed by Liberato De Caro [in 2022] ... dates the Shroud to about 55 to 74 A.D. And that's a very well-documented, well-grounded dating test, and it's completely independent of carbon emissions. And it correlates with three other dating tests that were done by Dr. Giulio Fanti [in 2013].*

The 2013 tests placed the Shroud at 90 A.D., with a margin of error of +/-150 years.

### 4. How was the image on the Shroud produced?

“The image had to be produced by a strong burst of radiation. There simply isn't any other explanation. No substance was used to produce the image,” says Fr. Spitzer.

### 5. Is there imaging from inside the body – or only outside?

The inside of the body is shown on the Shroud. “For example, on the Shroud, the backbone of the man, which is obviously inside the body, [can be seen] in three-dimensional proportionality to the flesh surrounding the body,” says Father.

### 6. Is the image on the Shroud two- or three-dimensional?

“It is an image that resembles an MRI, magnetic resonance imaging, which has the three-dimensional data encoded in the actual image,” says Fr. Spitzer. “So we can tell not only how far each part of the body was from the Shroud itself, but also the backbone relative to the flesh surrounding it.”

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**7. In summary, according to Fr. Spitzer, what are the five pieces of evidence that the Shroud is Jesus' burial cloth?**

- The man on the Shroud has the unique marks of Jesus' Crucifixion.
- The wide-angle x-ray scattering dating confirms that the date of the Shroud corresponds to the Gospel accounts.
- The image must have been produced by a strong burst of radiation.
- There is imaging from inside the body.
- The image is three-dimensional.

**8. What can explain the five pieces of evidence?**

Fr. Spitzer says,

*There's only one explanation [for] all five unusual aspects of that image, and that's radiation. And of course, the imaging on the inside is only explained by one radiation hypothesis – and that's ... called the particle radiation hypothesis.*

*If that particle radiation hypothesis occurred, in other words, if the actual particles from Jesus' body actually came off the body and onto the cloth, or at least a lot of them did, sufficient to produce the image and sufficient to produce other enigmas on the cloth, then that would be a miracle.*

*You can say, "Well, there was some kind of a low-temperature nuclear reaction that sort of gave rise to this flux of protons and neutrons." You could say something like that. And that seems to be the hypothesis to explain it. But to have that kind of a low-temperature nuclear reaction taking place in every single part of the body simultaneously, more than 36 hours after [the body is] placed in the tomb, that is going to require a miracle, a supernatural explanation.*

**9. What does the pollen on the Shroud tell us?**

Fr. Spitzer says,

*The pollen grains ... clearly manifest [where] the Shroud spent its longest period of time. We're talking about almost between two-thirds to three-quarters of the fallen grains in the Shroud come from Jerusalem and northern Judea. Fourteen of them are indigenous to that region, and four of them are unique to that region.*

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*They've never been found anywhere else outside of Jerusalem and northern Judea except on the Shroud of Turin. So obviously it spent a very long time there, probably had its origin there, and probably was in the open air for quite some time in the region of Jerusalem, Northern Judea.*

**10. In 1988, carbon dating seemed to indicate that the Shroud of Turin was made in the Middle Ages. What are some potential problems with that dating?**

Fr. Spitzer says there are strong reasons to question these findings:

*There's a large group of scientists who think that the 1988 carbon dating was a flawed dating test. The problem was not with the dating itself. The problem was in this eight-centimeter piece of the cloth that was taken. You can see that there is an age variation of nearly [250] years. At the outermost edge of the sample [near the edge of the Shroud], ... the measured date is 1155. However, the dating at the edge of the sample which is nearest to the body is around 1400. Now you think to yourself, how in the world could that happen? How could you have almost 250 years of variance in an eight-centimeter sample?*

*... A variance of 91 years per inch indicates a systematic error in the carbon dating, and a systematic error means there's something in that cloth that's throwing off the dating of the cloth.*

*[The team that published the findings] elevated the margins of error. ... And this hid the fact that within that eight-centimeter piece of cloth, there were more than two standard deviations of variation. Which indicates a systematic error in the dating that was covered up by elevating the margins of error – an error that was covered up.*

*By hiding the systematic error, it made it look like the carbon dating was [accurate], but given the above, it could not have been accurate.*



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### 11. Why was there a huge variation in the dating of an eight-centimeter sample?

Fr. Spitzer says,

*Let's suppose that the labs did give accurate dates, which I think they did. What else could have produced this systematic error that everybody tried to cover up?*

*Answer: **neutrons**. In the particle radiation hypothesis, the low-temperature nuclear reaction gives up two fluxes of particles, two showers of particles.*

*The first is called a proton-deuteron flux. These are heavy positively charged particles that embed themselves into the upper surface of the fibrils to produce the very unusual image we see today – an image that encodes three-dimensional information (like an MRI) and even imaging from the inside of the body (like the backbone of the man in the Shroud).*

*There is also a second shower of particles – what is called a neutron flux. Neutrons are heavy uncharged particles. They do not embed themselves in the cloth, but go right through it, irradiating the blood stains and the cloth as they pass through.*

*Now here's the point: The Shroud is made of linen, and linen has a significant content of the nitrogen isotope N14. Let's suppose that the body of the man in the Shroud did emit a powerful flux of neutrons. It is well known that N14 plus a neutron yields C14 (carbon 14) plus a proton. In other words, if the body emitted a large number of neutrons, many of them would have combined with the N14 in the linen cloth, producing a very large extra quantity of C14, which is precisely what is measured by the Carbon 14 dating method. This extra quantity of C14 will move the date of carbon dating forward by hundreds of years.*

*Now let's return to that 250-year variance in the eight-centimeter sample taken from the cloth. Remember the edge of the sample that was closest to the body was dated later (1400) than the edge of the sample furthest from the body (1150). This is precisely what we would expect if the body emitted a strong flux of neutrons because the neutron density in the cloth closer to the body would produce more C14 than the edge of the sample furthest from the body. If we remove the effects of neutron emission from the dating, the date of the Shroud's origin is very close to the **mid first century** – this is in substantial agreement with the wide angle x-ray scattering tests (55 A.D. to 74 A.D.) and the Fourier Transformed Infrared Spectroscopy and the Raman Infrared Spectroscopy which also date the Shroud to the first century.*

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*This can be confirmed in the next scientific test of the Shroud by looking for cosmogenic isotopes (e.g.  $Cl^{36}$  and  $Ca^{41}$ ) and taking carbon dating tests closer to the body. For example, physicists predict that samples taken from the cloth around three inches from the body should show a dating of 1,000 years into the future! Of course this is absurd from the vantage point of dating, but the super abundance of  $Cl^{14}$  in the cloth so close to the body will actually show a date in the distant future. In sum, the Shroud very probably originated in the mid first century.*

### 12. How could the bloodstains on the Shroud still be bright red, as if they are new?

“One of the mysteries of the Shroud for the longest time was ... blood, within a few days, will move from bright red to dark red to brown and to eventually to black,” says Fr. Spitzer. “So, within a few weeks, certainly, every bloodstain on that Shroud should be pretty close to black or at least dark brown to black.”

Why is the blood still bright red? “Easy explanation,” says Fr. Spitzer. “You irradiate that with neutrons, and once you expose the radiated blood to sunlight, you will see that they all turn bright red, all 372 of them.”

### 13. Does anything else point to the belief that the Shroud of Turin wasn't a medieval forgery?

Fr. Spitzer says,

*The bloodstains were set on the Shroud before the image. Now that makes sense because, of course, [Jesus] was laid in the tomb; the Shroud was put on; the blood on the body adhered to the Shroud right away; whereas the Resurrection takes place at least 36 hours later.*

*So, of course, this means that the image should be on top of the blood and not underneath, which is precisely what we found. But how could a forger do this – especially a medieval forger who has basically a child's knowledge of anatomy compared to what we know today – and make it anatomically perfect? I never bought the whole idea of the forgery. I just knew that an explanation would come out in the Lord's good time. And so it has.*



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### 14. How does the Divine Mercy image correspond with the Shroud of Turin?



Image provided by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski

In the 1930s, Jesus appeared to a young Polish nun, Sr. Faustina Kowalska. In a series of visions, Jesus told Sr. Faustina about His great mercy for all mankind. He asked that an image be made of Him with the words “Jesus, I trust in You.” So, Sr. Faustina worked with an artist to paint Jesus just as she saw Him.

Fr. Spitzer says, “Sr. Faustina Kowalska visited that artist many times and made numerous corrections to the point of nearly driving him crazy, but she had a very exact image in her mind and that she wanted to bring out. And of course, Jesus was so much more beautiful than any image could possibly be, but she got it as accurate as she could.”

In recent years, people have compared the original Divine Mercy image and the Shroud of Turin, finding they are very similar. Fr. Spitzer says, “To most experts’ knowledge, Sr. Faustina, now St. Faustina, never saw the Shroud of Turin. It’s basically her own vision of Jesus.”

Fr. Spitzer continues,

*The long and the short of it is, there’s a high correlation [between the Divine Mercy image and the Shroud of Turin], and studies have been done [to prove this].*

*There’s just a slight variation in the size of the head. You can actually do a slight enlargement of the head, and then you can raise it up just a little bit, parts of an inch. And then you can start doing measurements from the side of the left eye to the side of the right eye. ... You can take a look at the shape of the beard, which is a very distinctly Semitic-shaped beard. You can look at the hair, and you can look at the length of the hair and the style of the hair. ... [And] you can see the shape of that nose very clearly.*

*And there are about ten other characteristics that you can make a comparison on. And then if you [take] the Divine Mercy image and just overlay it on the Shroud of Turin, make that slight enlargement of the head, everything else is proportionately the same. And then you superimpose it, [and the images are] almost identical.*

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*So, either Sr. Faustina saw the image of Jesus, as she said, or she's got the most amazingly coincidental capacity ever known to human beings to replicate the Shroud image without ever having seen it.*

### 15. Are there comparisons to be made between the Shroud and the Tilma of Guadalupe?

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to St. Juan Diego in 1531 outside of Mexico City. She told him she was the “Mother of the true God” and asked for a church to be built there in her honor. Since the archbishop requested a sign from Juan Diego, Our Lady arranged roses in the future saint’s tilma. As Juan Diego approached the archbishop, his tilma opened to reveal the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as the roses fell to the ground. After this event, nine million Mexicans converted to Catholicism within only eight years.

Just as Mary requested, a basilica was built at the foot of Tepeyac Hill, and millions of people have made a pilgrimage there to witness Juan Diego’s tilma. Since then, there have been many scientifically documented mysteries surrounding the tilma.

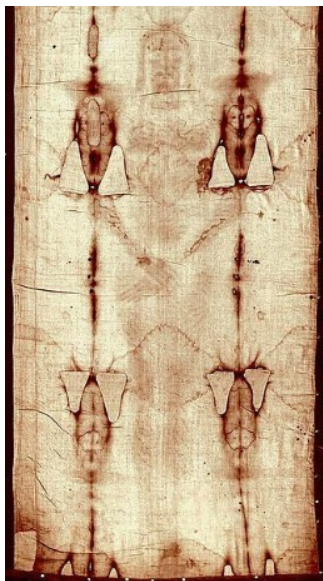


Image provided by Shutterstock

One of these mysteries is the remarkable longevity of the tilma. The Shroud shares this characteristic with the tilma though for a very different mysterious reason.

Fr. Spitzer says,

*As scientists have long noticed, the Shroud has exceptional strength, durability, and resistance to solvents and water – far beyond what would be expected of a cloth dating back 2,000 years. How did this happen?*

*The Shroud is a very fine linen with a very fine weave. It was an expensive cloth. When you take a linen cloth and you expose it to a very powerful burst of neutrons that are penetrating it, it breaks up the weak linear carbonyl bonds in the cloth. And when the carbonyl bonds reconstitute themselves, they do so as strong crystalline carbonyl bonds. This explains why the Shroud is so tough and durable – and doesn’t age like any other linen cloth. It’s been touched a million times by people, and yet it seems to resist decomposition in any significant level.*

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Fr. Spitzer then said,

*Now, in the case of the Tilma of Guadalupe, we see the same resistance to age and decomposition, but for a different reason. The agave cactus fibers (from which the tilma was woven) should have decomposed completely about 400 years ago. We know of no agave cactus fabric dating back over a hundred years, and this one is almost 500 years old without notable decomposition – quite naturalistically inexplicable.*

*In both cases, something supernatural happened. In the case of the Shroud we have a naturalistically inexplicable neutron flux emitting from a dead human body, in case of the tilma, we have the cactus fibers that have not been specially preserved resisting decomposition beyond any natural process or structure. A supernatural hand seems to be manifest in both clothes.*

### 16. Is the Shroud of Turin authentic?

Fr. Spitzer says,

*I think the preponderance of evidence clearly points to the authenticity of the Shroud, that it is of Jesus Christ and His unique Crucifixion. That its origin is in the mid first century, that its region of origin is Jerusalem/Northern Judea (as indicated by pollen grains embedded in it), that the blood preceded the image on the Shroud (making this an almost impossible task for a medieval forger), and that there is a strong likelihood that the image production required supernatural causation all point to Jesus.*

*Though particle radiation is the most probable explanation, the odds of a **whole** dead body undergoing a low-temperature nuclear reaction and nuclear decay, emitting a powerful flux of protons and deuterons as well as a powerful flux of neutrons, is about the same as a monkey typing the first two scenes of MacBeth perfectly by randomly tapping of the keys in a single try. If that happened, it would be naturalistically inexplicable – a miracle.*

*Summing up, this Shroud has a significant convergence of data showing not only the unique Crucifixion of Jesus in first-century Jerusalem, but also the strong likelihood of the image being of supernatural origin.*



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### 17. What does the Shroud tell us about Jesus' Crucifixion?

Fr. Spitzer says,

*The Shroud gives an almost exact account with much more anatomical detail of the Gospel narratives on the Passion of Jesus. He was crowned with thorns (woven out of Syrian Christ thorns plentiful in the region of Jerusalem/Northern Judea) – the only crucifixion victim known in history to be crowned with thorns. A spear was thrust into His side between the fifth and sixth ribs that nicked the heart and burst the pleural cavity from which blood (from the heart) followed by transparent pleural fluid (from the pleural cavity surrounding the lungs) squirted out of the spear wound (looking very much like blood and water; see John 19:33-34). He was flogged by a Roman flagrum (with three straps having lead pieces on the ends tearing His flesh to pieces and causing Him to lose considerable blood), and He was pierced in the hands and the feet with nails very similar to those used by the Romans in their crucifixion. The fact that several of these characteristics of the crucifixion are unique to Jesus (e.g. the crown of thorns and the spear wound with remnants of blood and pleural fluid), that the weapons used are not medieval, but Roman, and the virtual impossibility of any medieval forger (or contemporary forger) producing this most unique image by any naturalistic means, all lead to a reasonable and responsible belief that the man in the Shroud was in fact Jesus Christ, who left behind the blood of His Crucifixion and the remnants of the supernatural radiation from His Resurrection.*

### 18. What deeper message can Christians learn from the Shroud of Turin?

Fr. Spitzer says,

*The Shroud has not only a perfect three-dimensional photographic negative image of the inside and outside of that body, but the image is actually constituted by the very particles that constituted Jesus' body. He left evidence of the terrible and horrifying nature of His Passion, as well as the glory, the power, and the spirit of His Resurrection. It seems to me that the Lord had the 20th- and 21st-century scientifically-oriented and skeptical generation in mind when He supernaturally caused the low-temperature nuclear reaction and degradation that left us with this very precise image of Himself, His Crucifixion, and His glorious Resurrection. I think He wanted us to use the best of our science and technology to reveal the truth of the Gospels as well as His Son's divinity. I can just see Him thinking to Himself, "I wonder what they're going to say when science unveils the mystery, miracle, glory, and love of my Son?" I have the thought that He was thinking 2,000 years ago, "Gotcha!"*



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## Learn More About the Shroud of Turin

[Father Spitzer's Universe](#)

[The Man of the Shroud](#)

[The Holy Winding Sheet](#)

[Magis Center Website](#)

*National Catholic Register*, “New Scientific Technique Dates Shroud of Turin to Around the Time of Christ’s Death and Resurrection”

*National Catholic Register*, “Nuclear Engineer Says Latest Research Confirms First-Century Date of Shroud of Turin”

*National Catholic Register*, “Shroud of Turin: What We Know About the Burial Cloth of Christ”



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