When love for the Holy Sepulchre leads to study

Pope Francis in front of the Holy Shroud during his visit to Turin in June 2015. Copyright: Osservatore Romano

Fr. Peter B. Mangum, Rector of the Cathedral of St. John Berchmans in Shreveport, Louisiana, and **Dr. Cheryl White,** of Louisiana State University at Shreveport, were granted access to the **Vatican Secret Archives for primary research on the Shroud of Turin** earlier in 2018. This ancient strip of linen cloth, in the custody of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, is believed by many faithful Christians to be the burial cloth of Jesus Christ taken from the Holy Sepulchre immediately following the Resurrection (cf. John 20). Fr. Mangum and Dr. White, **both members in the U.S. Southeastern Lieutenancy**, have pursued their academic interest in this holy relic because of their dedication to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, and also because of their membership in the American Confraternity of the Holy Shroud, which is the only authorized affiliate of the Archconfraternity of Turin, the official custodians of the Shroud since 1592.

The **focus of their research is what is known as the Shroud's "Missing Years," a period from 1204 to 1355** where the historical record has thus far been mostly silent. Scholars believe the *sindon* (burial shroud) was in Constantinople in 1204 when that city was sacked by knights of the Fourth Crusade, after which time it disappeared from the direct historical record. Then, in 1355, the Shroud went on public display in Lirey, France, where it was recorded to be in the ownership of a French knight, Geoffrey de Charny. Fr. Mangum and Dr. White's research in the Vatican Secret Archives, which will be ongoing, seeks to find clues to the Shroud's location during this specific time period.

During the first three-day research visit this April, they were able to investigate **Vatican registers related to the canonization of King St. Louis IX**, who is known to have owned many Passion relics. Additionally, they are examining the papers of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), who ordered the Fourth Crusade and attempted to restore relations with Constantinople after the city's siege. Both Fr. Mangum and Dr. White believe their initial work holds great promise of providing more information about the "Missing Years" of the Shroud of Turin.

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