



Chapter 22

# The Resurrection

*“And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee.*

*“Holy Father, keep them in thy name,...”*”

*John 17: 11*

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### Read

**John**  
20:1 - 21:25

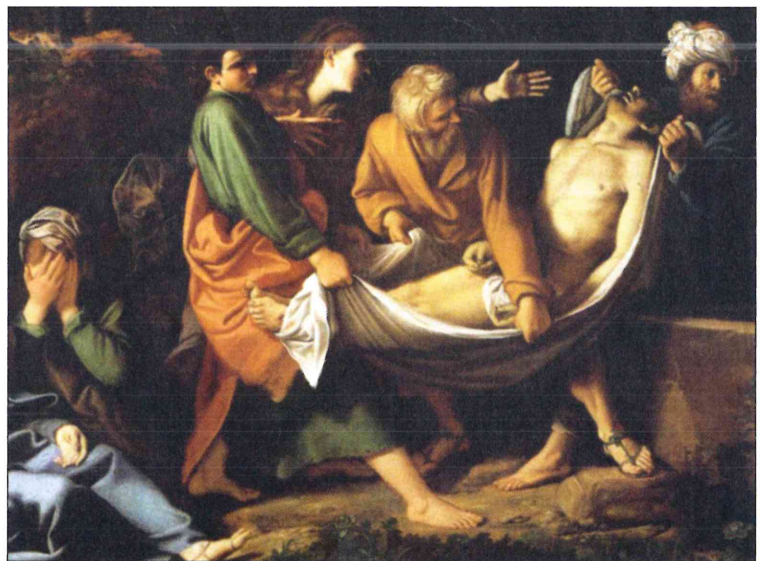
**Luke**  
24:13 - 53

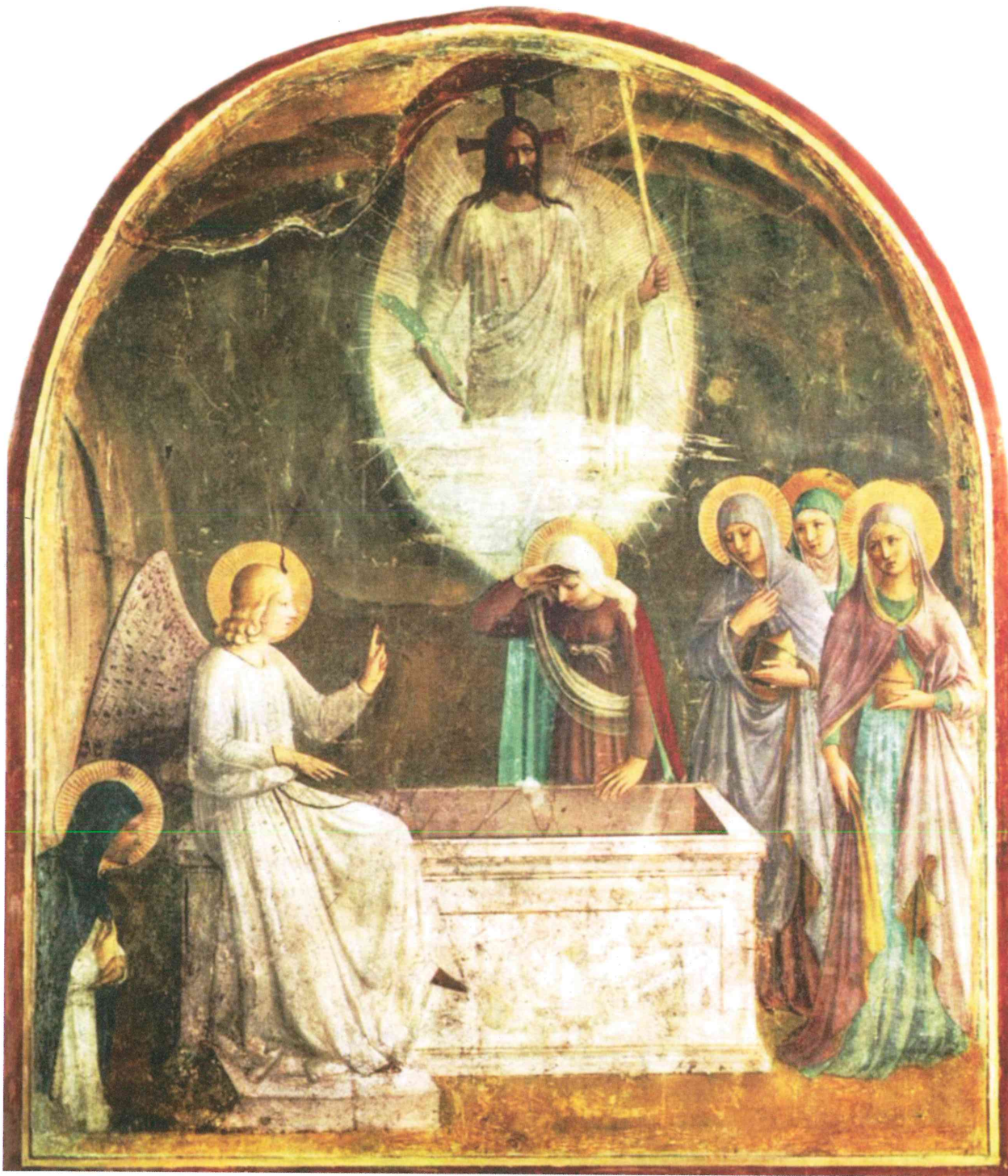
**1 Corinthians**  
15:3 - 11

Ordinarily, the bodies of crucified criminals would be dumped in a public burial ground. But one of Jesus' wealthy followers, Joseph of Arimathea, was bold enough to risk his position in the Sanhedrin by asking Pilate for Jesus' body. Nicodemus, too, the well-known Pharisee who had come to see Jesus by night, brought myrrh and aloes for a traditional Jewish burial. Everything had to be done before the Sabbath began to avoid defilement. Jesus' body was quickly wrapped in linen and laid in a new tomb donated by Joseph of Arimathea.

Joseph was a rich man, and the tomb he donated was worthy of a royal burial. It was probably dug into the rock in the side of a hill. The gate to the tomb was a big disk-shaped stone, so big that it took more than one strong man to move it.

Meanwhile, the chief priests were still afraid of what the followers of Jesus might do. They asked Pilate to post a Roman guard at the tomb to make sure no one would come and steal the body. They said, "This last fraud would be worse than the first." Pilate told them to get their own guard, which they did.





*“Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.  
He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him.”  
(Mk 16: 6)*



*“Rabboni!.... Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father;...’” (Jn 20: 16-17)*

## The Women Who Met The Risen Lord

Jesus had been buried so hastily that there had not been time to embalm his body correctly. When the Sabbath was over, some of the women who had followed him decided to do this one last honor for their beloved master.

And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, brought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.” (Mk 16: 1-7)

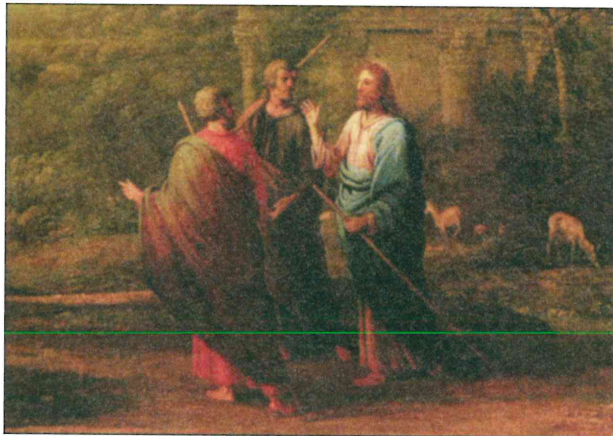
Mary Magdalene ran back to Simon and John, and told them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”<sup>1</sup> Peter and John ran to the tomb; John got there first, but he waited for Peter to go in. All they found was Jesus’ burial clothes. They went away puzzled.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid

him." Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord;" and she told them that he had said these things to her. (Jn 20:11-18)

According to Luke, "these words seemed to them an idle tale." They could not believe that Mary had really seen the Lord alive.

Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One (Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1; Jn 19:31, 42). Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection for the apostles themselves (cf. Lk 24:9-10; Mt 28:9-10; Jn 20:11-18). They were the next to whom Jesus appears: first Peter, then the Twelve. Peter had been called to strengthen the faith of his brothers (cf. 1 Cor 15:5; Lk 22:31-32), and so sees the Risen One before them; it is on the basis of his testimony that the community exclaims: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24:34, 36). (CCC 641)



## The Road To Emmaus: Jesus Revealed In The Eucharist

**B**ut two of Jesus' other followers had some business in a little village called Emmaus, a few hours' walk from Jerusalem. Naturally, while they walked they were talking about what had happened in the past few days.

While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (Lk 24:15-18)

The two disciples went on to tell the story of the last few days—including the odd tale they had heard from Mary Magdalene and the other women.

And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Lk 24:15-17)

What Jesus taught them was the same thing we have been learning in this book—how all of history led up to the death and resurrection of the Christ.

They had quite some time to spend talking as they walked on their way, and it was nearly sunset by the time they reached Emmaus. The two disciples invited the stranger to stay with them and have dinner.

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. (Lk 24:30-31)

It was in the breaking of bread that they recognized Jesus. Luke uses the same words he used in describing the Last Supper. The two disciples ran back to Jerusalem and found the apostles, telling them everything they had seen, "and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."<sup>2</sup>



*"... he took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him;... 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us...?'"* (Lk 24: 30-32)

## The Power To Forgive And Retain Sins

**T**en of the eleven remaining apostles were all huddled in a locked room that evening (they were still afraid of what the Jewish authorities might do to them). Suddenly Jesus was standing among them, saying “Peace be with you.”

*When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the father has sent me, even so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (Jn 20: 20-23)*

Only God had the power to forgive sins—a power that was manifest in Jesus, God the Son. Now Jesus was giving his power to the apostles. He held nothing back from them; he was giving them the same authority he himself had.

*Since Christ entrusted to his apostles the ministry of reconciliation (cf. Jn 20: 23; 2 Cor 5: 18), bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishops’ collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC 1461)*

## Doubting Thomas

**B**ut one of the apostles was missing. Thomas had not been there when Jesus appeared, and he refused to believe the story he heard. “Unless I see in his hands the print of his nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

A week later, the disciples were gathered in the same place. This time Thomas was with them.

*The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus said to him, “You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” (Jn 20: 26-29)*

Tradition tells us that Thomas became the greatest traveler of all the apostles, taking the Good News as far as India. Tradition also gives us a fascinating detail about Thomas. The very earliest Christians did not use a cross as a symbol of their faith, but Thomas always kept a plain wooden cross with him wherever he went. It must have reminded him of what he had learned in that one blinding moment: that Jesus Christ really had died, and really had risen from the dead.

## Back To Galilee

**A**fter he had given them the power to forgive and retain sins, Jesus’ disciples followed the instructions they had been given to go back to Galilee.

“Why Galilee?” we might ask. Certainly it was a question most Jews in Jerusalem would have asked. Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish world; Galilee was a backwater. But the prophets had foretold the restoration of the whole kingdom of Israel, not just Judah. And Isaiah’s prophecy had picked out Galilee as the place where that restoration would begin.



The land of Zebulun and  
Naphtali,  
toward the sea, across the  
Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles—  
the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the  
region and shadow of death,  
light has dawned.  
(Isaiah's prophecy as quoted  
in Mt 4: 13-16)

There, by the Sea of Galilee, Peter, John, and several other disciples went back to fishing. After a night of no luck at all, they saw a stranger calling to them from the beach. When he heard that they had caught no fish, the stranger told them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. Since they were willing to try anything, they did as he said, and they could hardly lift the net for the weight of the fish they caught. John understood then who the stranger was: "It is the Lord!"<sup>3</sup>

Peter jumped into the water and swam to shore, leaving the rest of the apostles to haul in the load of fish. They found 153 fish in the net—a symbolic number: Greek philosophers identified 153 different kinds of fish in the world, so the apostles would be sent by our Lord to preach to every nation in the world.

## Peter's Redemption

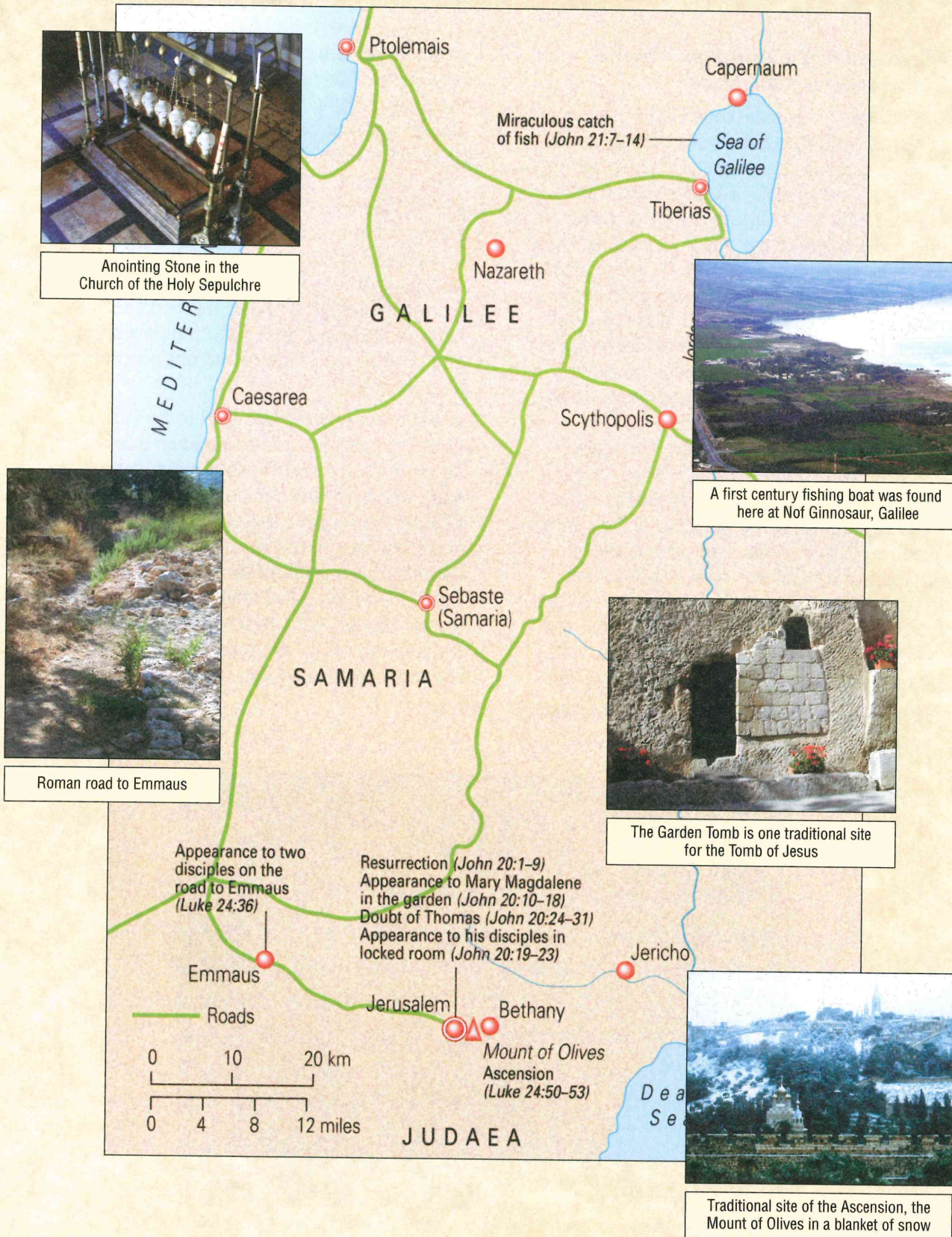
When they reached the shore, Jesus had a fire ready—a "charcoal fire," John tells us. That term occurs only one other place in the New Testament: in John's account of Peter's triple denial. Now Jesus is setting up the same situation, giving Peter a chance to redeem himself.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." (Jn 21: 15-17)

Three times Peter had denied Jesus in front of a charcoal fire; now Jesus had given him a chance to undo that denial three times. Jesus in return gave Peter the care over his "lambs," all the believers everywhere. As he had declared before, Christ would build his Church on Peter.



# The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus



SUPPLEMENTARY READING

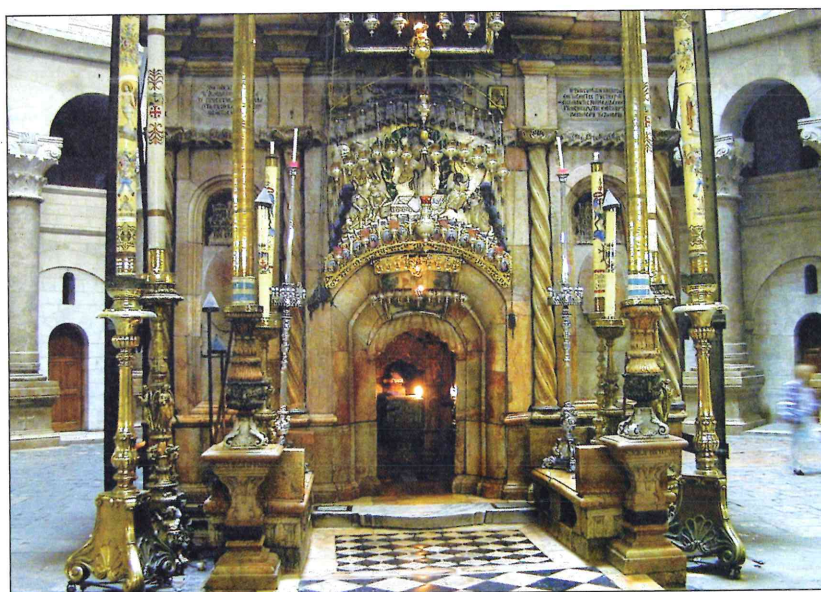
**Athenagoras the Athenian: *On the Resurrection of the Dead***

It behooves, therefore, those who disbelieve or doubt concerning the resurrection, to form their opinion on the subject, not from any view they have hastily adopted, and from what is acceptable to profligate men, but either to assign the origin of men to no cause (a notion which is very easily refuted), or, ascribing the cause of all things to God, to keep steadily in view the principle involved in this article of belief, and from this to demonstrate that the resurrection is utterly unworthy of credit. This they will succeed in, if they are able to show that it is either impossible for God, or contrary to His will, to unite and gather together again bodies that are dead, or even entirely dissolved into their elements, so as to constitute the same persons. If they cannot do this, let them cease from this godless disbelief, and from this blasphemy against sacred things: for, that they do not speak the truth when they say that it is impossible, or not in accordance with the divine will, will clearly appear from what I am about to say.

A thing is in strictness of language considered impossible to a person, when it is of such a

kind that he either does not know what is to be done, or has not sufficient power for the proper doing of the thing known. For he who is ignorant of anything that requires to be done, is utterly unable either to attempt or to do what he is ignorant of; and he, too, who knows ever so well what has to be done, and by what means, and how, but either has no power at all to do the thing known, or not power sufficient, will not even make the attempt, if he be wise and consider his powers; and if he did attempt it without due consideration, he would not accomplish his purpose.

But it is not possible for God to be ignorant, either of the nature of the bodies that are to be raised, as regards both the members entire and the particles of which they consist, or whither each of the dissolved particles passes, and what part of the elements has received that which is dissolved and has passed into that with which it has affinity, although to men it may appear quite impossible that what has again combined according to its nature with the universe should be separable from it again.



Just inside the edicule in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the small Chapel of the Angel with a small door which gives access to the stone Tomb of Jesus.

## VOCABULARY

### CLEOPAS

One of the followers of Jesus who met him on the road to Emmaus.

### EMMAUS

A small village a few hours away from Jerusalem. After his Resurrection, two of Jesus' followers met him on the road to Emmaus, but did not recognize him until he broke bread with them.

### JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

An influential member of the Sanhedrin who buried Jesus' body in his own tomb.

### MARY MAGDALENE

One of the women who followed Jesus. She was the first person to have seen the risen Lord.

### RECONCILIATION

The sacrament by which Christ forgives sins. Jesus gave his Apostles — who passed it on to their successors down to this day—the power to forgive and retain sins.

### RESURRECTION

Jesus' coming to life again on the third day. There were many witnesses who saw the risen Jesus.

### THOMAS

One of the Twelve. He was not present when Jesus appeared to the rest. He refused to believe Jesus had risen unless he could see for himself. He became a zealous missionary, traveling to India.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who donated the tomb Jesus was buried in?
2. Who were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection?
3. Who brought the news of the Resurrection to the apostles?
4. Who went to the tomb to check out the report?
5. What did Jesus do that made him recognizable to the disciples who had met him on the way to Emmaus?
6. What sacrament did Jesus grant the apostles the authority to minister when he first appeared to them after the Resurrection?
7. What did Jesus do before authorizing the apostles to minister Reconciliation?
8. How does Jesus respond when Thomas recognizes him as "Lord and God"?
9. Where did the apostle Thomas do his ministry?
10. Where did Jesus' disciples go when they left Jerusalem?
11. Where did the prophet Isaiah foretell the restoration would begin?
12. Why was it symbolic that the apostles caught 153 fish when they cast their nets where Jesus told them to?
13. What is the symbolism of the charcoal fire?
14. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, what important question did Jesus ask Peter three times and why ask it?

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

**1.** “Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the ‘Feast of feasts,’ the ‘Solemnity of solemnities,’ just as the Eucharist is the ‘Sacrament of sacraments’ (the Great Sacrament). St. Athanasius calls Easter ‘the Great Sunday’ (St. Athanasius (ad 329) *ep. fest.* 1: PG 24, 1366) and the Eastern Churches call Holy Week ‘the Great Week.’ The mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ crushed death, permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him” (CCC 1169). What does this quote mean? Why does it make sense that Easter is celebrated as the most important day of the Church year?

**2.** The two disciples on the road to Emmaus did not know why Jesus had died on the cross or that he had been resurrected. All they knew was that their master had died and his body had disappeared. When they spoke to Jesus, he explained how all the scriptures led up to his death and resurrection for the forgiveness

of our sins. The two disciples finally recognized Christ in the breaking of the bread, and understood all that had happened. Though we may not understand everything that is happening in the world or why God allows certain events, it is important to accept what God permits, both good and bad. What are some things happening in the world that seem to have no good purpose? How can the Gospels, prayer, and the Eucharist help us to understand the world as these two disciples did?

**3.** Thomas was skeptical when he first heard about Jesus’ appearance after his passion and death. He did not believe based on the words of the other apostles alone. God did more than just offer Thomas the grace to believe, he let him touch his wounds as definitive proof. Was Thomas’ doubting a sin? What do we all need from God in order to believe in and to know him?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**153** When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come “from flesh and blood,” but from “my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:17, cf. Gal 1:15; Mt 11:25). *Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.* “Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and ‘makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth’” (DV 5; cf. DS 377; 3010).

**434** Jesus’ Resurrection glorifies the name of the Savior God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the “name which is above every name” (Phil 2:9-10; cf. Jn 12:28). The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name (cf. Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16; Mk 16:17; Jn 15:16).

**644** Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. “In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering” (Lk 24:38-41). Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord’s last appearance in Galilee “some doubted” (cf. Jn 20:24-27; Mt 28:17). Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles’ faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.

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### Endnotes

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1. Jn 20:2.
2. Lk 24:35.
3. Jn 21:7.