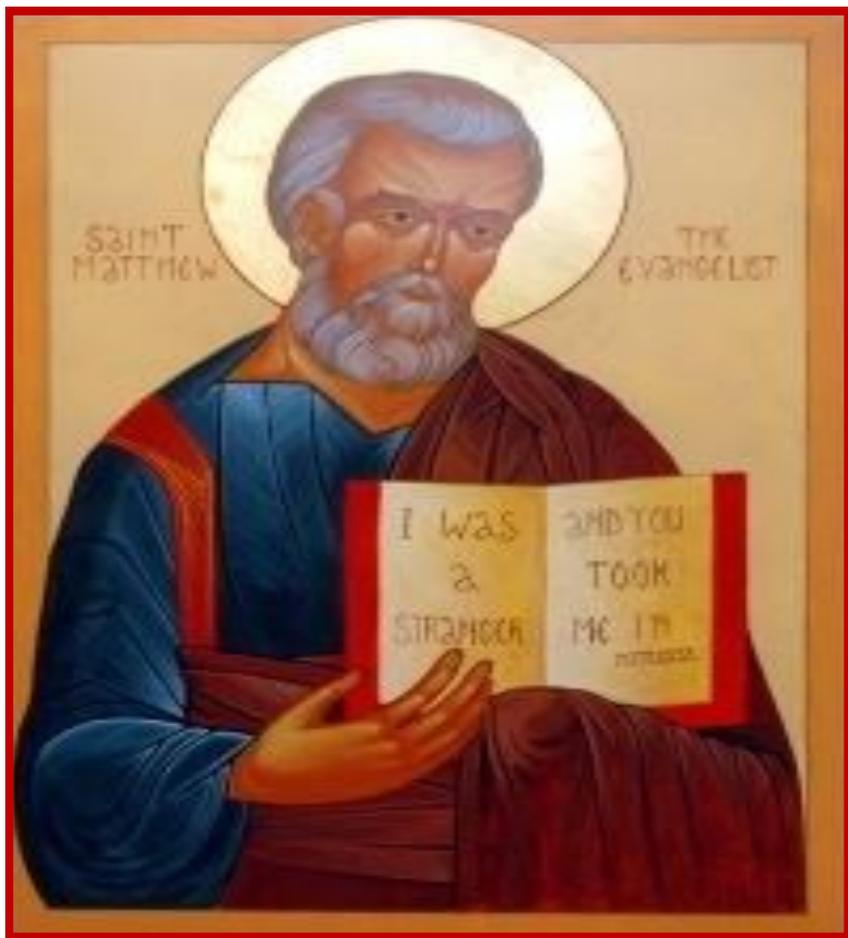


Verse 61- *And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary.* The other Mary, the mother of James and Joses. It appears that Salome, having no further office to do for Jesus, returned home in sorrow, or took home the Blessed Virgin. Simeon Metaphrastes, however, asserts that the Blessed Virgin remained on the spot till the resurrection, as assuredly believing that it would take place on the third day.

Sitting over against the sepulchre. Our Lord, as was fitting, was laid out by men, and not by women, who, while this was taking place, did not venture to enter the sepulchre. But they waited till the men retired, and then went in and saw how he was laid, that they might return very early the next morning, when the Sabbath was over, and anoint His body.



PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com



For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Matthew 27: 47-61

Verse 47- *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.* According to S. Jerome and others, these were the Roman soldiers, who also gave Him vinegar (Luke xxiii. 36). But not understanding Hebrew, they thought He called for Elias, of whose return at Christ's coming they had heard from the Jews.

Verse 48- *And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink.* All these were ready at hand, for the drink used to be given to those who were crucified. They did this as soon as Jesus had cried, "I thirst" (John xix. 28), His fifth word on the Cross. The sponge was for Christ to suck out the vinegar, as they could not lift a cup to His lips. The sponge is preserved in St. John's Lateran. Wine was usually given to those who were crucified, to quench their thirst, and strengthen them to bear their tortures. But the Jews (and, the soldiers to gratify the Jews' hatred to Christ) offered Him vinegar instead (Ps. 1xix. 22). De Lyra says (quoting Prov. xxxi. 6) that devout women used to prepare wine

Anagogically: Christ thus signified that He and His were strangers on earth, and that Heaven was their true country. S. Antony, S. Ephrem, S. Francis, and others preferred to be buried in another's grave, and not their own, after Christ's pattern. Here, then, was fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (xi. 10), "And His sepulchre shall be glorious." Hence, too, the custom of pilgrimages to Jerusalem for so many centuries. Hence the erection by S. Helena of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with its surpassing splendour, enclosing under the same roof the site of the crucifixion, resurrection, &c. Hence the wish of Godfrey of Bouillon, and other kings after him, to be buried on the same spot, and the institution also of an order of knighthood.

Lastly, that tomb was in a garden, because Adam had sinned in a garden. Hence, too, Christ began His Passion in a garden, and completed it by being buried in a garden. And this, too, to atone for the sentence passed on Adam; and, moreover, that He might form and plant a most beautiful garden, flourishing with the blossoms and fruits of all virtues, *i.e.*, His Church. Note here that Christ's body was laid in the tomb, as on the Cross, with its head and face so turned as to look away from the east, and towards the west. So Bede and Adrichomius.

Observe, Christ, as soon as He expired, descended in His soul to *the Limbus Patrum*, and made the patriarchs glad by manifesting to them Himself and His Godhead. He freed also the souls in Purgatory, and gave them the first general jubilee. He manifested His Godhead to them also, and made them blessed (see on 1 Pet. iii. 19). The devils also, and ungodly men in hell, He condemned to perpetual punishment, as their Lord, their judge, and their triumphant Victor. The soul of Christ there remained till the third day, when it came forth with the Patriarchs and other saints, resumed its body, and rose in glory. He then made the Patriarchs resume their bodies, and rise together with Him. The order, mode and time when these things took place is mentioned in the beginning of Chap. xxviii. Observe, the Godhead of Christ, the Divine Person of the Word, ever remained hypostatically united both to His body in the tomb and to His soul in the *Limbus*, for that which it once assumed it never gave up, and will not give up for ever.

And he rolled (aided by his servants and Nicodemus) a great stone to the door of the sepulchre. That no one might take away the body; or, rather, Divine Wisdom so ordered it, lest the Jews after the resurrection should deny the fact, and maintain that the Apostles, who had stolen the body away, had boldly invented the tale. And for the same reason God willed that His body should be buried by those, as Joseph and Nicodemus, who were worthy of credit, and that it should be sealed up and watched by the Jews, that in this way His death and subsequent resurrection might be clearly known to all. Now the Lord's body, while still in the grave, gave indeed an indication and prelude (as it were) of His resurrection, by remaining uncorrupt for three days; being in truth a virgin and holy body, fashioned by the Holy Spirit, and as such does it abide for ever.

Mark adds, "But Pilate marvelled if He were already dead," because the thieves were not yet dead, and also (says Euthymius) because he expected that Jesus would die slowly being a divine man, far surpassing others in endurance. "But when he knew from the Centurion that He was dead, he gave the body to Joseph" (Mark xv. 45)

Verse 59- *And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.* Such a cloth well suited this most pure body. Sindon is a cloth woven of the finest and most delicate flax, so called from Sidon, where it was first made. The Jews used to wrap their dead bodies in it, bound their hands and feet with bandages, and the head with a napkin (John xi. 44). Thus did Joseph do to Christ (John xix. 40). S. Jerome from this condemns the lavish funerals of the rich, and adds, "But we can take this to signify, in a spiritual sense, that he who receives Jesus in a pure mind wraps him in a clean linen cloth."

For this reason the body of Christ is in the Mass placed only in a very clean and fine linen cloth. This is called a Corporal, from the body of Christ which it contains within it, as though in a tomb. S. John adds that Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes to anoint and perfume the body (John xix. 39). For these kept bodies from putrefying. *Mystically:* Euthymius wishes us to be fragrant with these ointments when we receive the body of Christ in our breast, as in a new tomb. "Let us, too," he says, "when we receive the body of Christ at the altar, anoint it with sweet odours, *i.e.*, by virtuous acts and by contemplation," &c. Baronius describes from Jewish writers their mode of laying out for burial.

Verse 60- *And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock.* S. John adds (xix. 41) that it was in a garden. It was "a new tomb," lest any one else who had there been buried should be supposed (says S. Chrysostom) or pretended (S. Jerome) to have risen again. S. Augustine says,

Mystically: As no one either before or after Him was conceived in the Virgin's womb, so no one either before or after Him was buried in this tomb.

In the rock. "For had it been built of many stones, and the foundations had fallen in, it might have been said that the body had been stolen away," says S. Jerome. Bede, on Mark xv., describes fully its shape, "That it was so high that a man could hardly touch the top. Its entrance was on the east. On the north was the place where the Lord lay, raised up above the rest of the floor, and open on the south." Adrichomius also describes it, and adds "that Joseph gave up his own tomb to Christ, who was thus buried in the grave of a stranger." "He who had no home of His own when alive (says Theophylact), has no tomb of His own, but is laid in another's tomb, and being naked is clothed by Joseph." "He is buried," says S. Augustine (*Serm. cxxxiii. de Temp.*), "in the tomb of another, because He died for the salvation of others. Why needed He a tomb of His own, who had not any true cause of death in Himself? Why needed He a tomb on earth, whose seat was for ever in Heaven? What had He to do with a tomb, who for the space of three days rather rested in His bed than lay dead in the grave?"

flavoured with spices, but that the Jews on this occasion took it away, and put in its stead vinegar mingled with gall.

Now they gave it Him in mockery, to give Him pain by the bitterness of the draught; to increase and not to quench His thirst, this being the property of vinegar. Baronius thinks it was given to keep Him alive, and thus prolong His suffering; Theophylact, Cajetan, and others, that it was to hasten His death. "For vinegar has malignant properties," says Theophylact, "which penetrates into wounds." Thus—

Symbolically: It signifies the malignity which the Jews, and all sinners, exhibit to Christ. So S. Augustine (in John xix. 29), "Give that which ye are yourselves." For the Jews were as vinegar, in degenerating from the wine of the Patriarchs and Prophets; having a heart full of iniquity, as a vessel full of vinegar; and full of fraud, like a sponge, with its winding and hollow hiding-places.

But Christ by drinking the vinegar converted it for us into wine, and by so doing gained power to turn our vices into virtues, our weaknesses into glory. "The wine," says S. Hilary, "which turned acid in Adam was the glory or might of immortality. But He drank it, and thus transfused into Himself, and into union with immortality, that which in us was vitiated." And so Remigius, "Vinegar means the Jews who had degenerated from their fathers; the sponge, their hearts full of fraud; the reed, Holy Scripture, which was thus fulfilled."

And put it on a reed. That is, the stalk of some plant. S. John (xix. 29) says it was the stalk of the hyssop. For the Cross was not high, so that by stretching out the arms the sponge on a short stalk would easily reach Christ's mouth. In Palestine the garden hyssop grows higher than in Europe, though on walls it grows low (1 Kings iv. 33). Sometimes it runs to 18 inches.

Some suspect that for *ύσσώπω* is to be read *ύσσώ*, a spear; a mere conjecture. Others think, with S. Augustine, that a sponge full of vinegar was placed on the hyssop, and then both of them on the reed. Others, that a sponge full of hyssop juice and vinegar was placed on the reed. Anyhow, the sponge was placed on the hyssop, whether it was itself the stalk or merely fastened to it.

Hyssop was given, because it is frequently used with wine and vinegar (see Columella, *de Re Rust.* xii. 35; and Pliny, *N. H.* xiv. 16). It has reviving, and strengthening, and other medicinal properties.

Now the soldiers tied the hyssop round the sponge, that the vinegar should not escape, and that Christ, taking the vinegar and the hyssop, might revive.

It was used for cleansing lepers (Lev. xiv. 49), also in the sin-offering and in the sprinkling of the water of purification (*Num. xix. 2 seq*); and was therefore a type of Christ's Blood, in its purifying, refreshing, and strengthening power. "It is a lowly herb," says S. Augustine on John xix., "cleansing the chest, and signifies the humility of Christ, whereby we are cleansed."

Verse 49- *But the rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save Him.* The word "let be" is here in the singular, in S. Mark in the plural. In the plural it would mean, keep quiet, attend solely to Jesus, see whether Elias will come to save Him; for they doubted whether He were really the Messiah, whose precursor Elias was to be. S. Mark says that only one soldier spoke thus, addressing the rest. It is supposed by S. Augustine (*de Cons. Evang. iii. 17*) and others that the word was used both by the one soldier and by the whole body; secondly, that the soldiers said to him that offered the vinegar, Wait a while, do not give it, for fear He should die too soon, for vinegar hastens death; let us see whether Elias will come. And that he replied, Let me give it, lest He should die of thirst. Just let Him drink it, and keep alive; so shall we see whether Elias will come (so Jansenius). Or, again, that the soldiers said to him who offered the vinegar, Leave Him alone, do not annoy Him. For they thought that Elias would come if He were left alone, but not if others were about Him. And that he replied, Cease your clamour, lest ye drive Elias away; or otherwise, Leave Him lest ye hasten His death (Barradi). Or, again, Suffer me to mock Him in this way, for the more He is molested, the more will Elias come if he wishes to help Him. What I am doing will not delay but rather hasten his coming. Or, it may be, Let me give Him the vinegar, for I shall thus kill Him, and keep Elias from saving Him. For all this (as S. Luke says) was done in jest and mockery

Verse 50- *But Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.* "Again" refers to the former words on the Cross. He first cried out, and then expired. S. Luke gives the exact words, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." In the Greek, "I will lay down My life; I will consign it into Thy hands as a deposit, to take it back when I am raised up on the third day." Hence the faithful use this verse when dying, as David first used it when in suffering (Ps. xxxi. 5).

It was by a miracle that Christ cried with a loud voice, for the dying lose their voice, so that they can hardly speak. For though S. Thomas says (*par. iii. q. 47*) that Christ preserved the vigour and strength of His body to the last; yet others suppose, more correctly, that His strength had so failed by what He had gone through, that He could not cry out naturally, but only by a miracle, for otherwise He would not have died through the violence of His sufferings, but merely by His own voluntary severing of His soul and body, and thus would not have been slain, or have made satisfaction to His Father by His death of violence.

He cried out, then, by the supernatural powers which His Godhead furnished. And that to signify, 1st, that He, as God, died not by compulsion or necessity, but of His own free will. As He said, "I have power to lay down My life," &c. (John x. 18); and that His sacrifice of Himself might clearly be voluntary. "He had His whole life and death," says S. Victor of Antioch, "entirely in His own power." 2nd To show that He

Verse 58- *He came to Pilate.* "Came boldly, says S. Mark, for though, for fear of the Jews, he was a secret disciple, yet he fearlessly entered on this difficult work; for he was both strengthened by Christ and urged on by the Blessed Virgin (see above, ver. 55). "From this we may see, says Victor of Antioch, "his great resolution and boldness, for he nearly sacrificed his own life for Christ's sake, by drawing down on himself the suspicions of his Jewish enemies;" and S. Chrysostom, "The boldness of Joseph is highly to be admired, when for love of Christ he incurred peril of death, and exposed himself to general hatred." S. Luke and S. Mark say, "who also himself waited for the Kingdom of God." He hoped, *i.e.*, through Christ, for heavenly love, and thus risked danger for His sake.

And begged the body of Jesus. S. Anselm (*Dial. de Pass.*) says it was revealed to himself by the Blessed Virgin that Joseph gave this reason, among others, for his request, that His mother was dying of grief for her only Son, and that it was unreasonable that the innocent mother should die as well as the Son; but that it would be some consolation to her to bury Him. Grant her, therefore, most afflicted as she is, this favour. It is probable, also, that he alleged the holiness and innocence of Jesus, which Pilate well knew, and that therefore His body ought not to be cast forth with those of criminals into the Valley of Corpses, adjoining Golgotha, but was worthy of honourable burial, which he was ready to provide.

A wild story is here told, on the authority of the Gospel of Nicodemus, that Joseph was in consequence imprisoned by the Chief Priests, and miraculously delivered; and that, when the Chief Priests required the soldiers to produce the body of Jesus, they replied, "Do you produce Joseph, and we will produce Christ" (Greg. Tur. *Hist. i. 21*), whereupon the soldiers were acquitted of the charge. There is an equally improbable story in Baronius (*ad An. 35, cap. 4*), that Joseph crossed with S. Mary Magdalene and others in a vessel without oars or sail to Marseilles, and from thence to England, where he preached Christ, and was venerated after his death there as the Apostle of England.

Then (having heard and approved of Joseph's reasons) Pilate *commanded the body to be delivered.* That he might thus make Him some kind of satisfaction for having condemned Him to death, and also palliate his own conduct by giving Him an honourable burial, as though he had condemned Him by compulsion.

To be delivered. On Joseph paying a price, says Theophylact. But this is not probable, for the reasons just given, and because S. Mark says, "He gave the body to Joseph," who had it as a gift, and did not pay for it. It would indeed have been a most sordid and avaricious act for Pilate to have sold it. "To be delivered" means "to be given," as in the Syriac. But the Evangelist says "to be delivered," because the body had been already given up to the soldiers for crucifixion. He orders them, therefore, to return it to Joseph. S.

and the dense crowd, kept them from coming very near. But they came as close as they could to hear and see Him. Adrichomius says about eighteen paces. Some say that they were close at one time, and farther off at another. The Greek adds, "beholding" both the wondrous patience of Jesus, and the prodigies which took place around Him, and pondering over them in their mind with holy meditation.

Ministering unto Him. Supporting Him and His disciples. S. Jerome says, "It was a Jewish custom for women thus to minister to their teachers."

Verse 56- *Among whom* (as the chief and leader of the rest) *was Mary Magdalene*, from whom He had cast forth seven devils, who clung to Him from gratitude, and would not be torn from Him.

And Mary the mother of James and Joses. The wife of Cleophas or Alphæus. Salmeron considers her the daughter of Cleophas; called from her relationship, Mary the sister of our Lord's mother, from her husband, Mary (the wife) of Alphæus. See above, chap. xiii. 55.

And the mother of Zebedee's children. Salome. See Mark xv. 40.

Verse 57- *But when even was come.* Evening was drawing on, but had not yet come, and it was necessary for Him to be buried before the evening, when the Sabbath (on which they had to rest) began.

A certain rich man. For a poor man would not have dared to make such a request, says S. Jerome.

Of Arimathæa. Called (1. Sam. i.) Ramathaim-Zophim, afterwards Rania, Aarima, and Memphis (S. Jerome, *de locis Hebr.*), called Rama from its high position. Joseph was a native of the place, but a citizen of Jerusalem. Arimathæa, says S. Jerome, means "lifted up," as was Joseph here.

Named Joseph. Christ came into the world by Joseph the betrothed husband of the Virgin, and was buried by another Joseph. Joseph means "increased"—that is, by the grace of God. For as the Patriarch Joseph abounded in chastity and affection for his father, so did Joseph the husband of the Virgin excel in chastity; and this Joseph, again, was eminent for his tender love for Christ, his spiritual father, when now dead. S. Mark calls him a noble Counsellor (*βουλευτής*), in Vulg. *decurio*, which was the provincial word for Senator. He is supposed to have been a Councillor of Jerusalem, from his having lived and made his burial-place there. Maldonatus supposes he took part in the Council about taking and killing Christ (Matt. xxvi. 4), but that he did not agree with the rest (Luke xxiii. 51). "Whence some think," says S. Jerome, "that he is spoken of in Ps. i."

Who also himself was Jesus' disciple, and thus wished to perform the last offices for his Master.

was more than man, and was God, as the Centurion exclaimed. 3rd To set forth His vehement love of God, His reverence, His obedience, and earnest desire for man's salvation (see Heb. v. 7, and notes thereon). 4th To indicate His sure and certain hope of His glorious resurrection on the third day (so Origen).

Yielded up the ghost. Voluntarily. "For that which is sent forth (*emittitur*) is voluntary, that which is lost (*amittitur*) is of necessity," S. Ambrose (*in Luc.* xxiii.); and S. Augustine (*de Trin.* iv. 13), "The spirit of the Mediator left not His body against His will, but because of it when He willed, and as He willed it; for man was blended into union with the Word of God. Hence He says, 'I have power,'" &c. (John x. 18).

So, too, S. Jerome, Bede, and others. Whence, also, "He bowed His head" (John xix. 30). "As the Lord of death," says Theophylact; "for other men when dying first breathe their last, and then bow the head, which thus droops by its own weight." S. Chrysostom says this was "to show that He died not of necessity, but voluntarily. He lived as long as He willed; when He willed He gave up the ghost." A spurious work attributed to S. Athanasius is also quoted to the same effect. For though His human nature sank beneath the violence of His pains, and He ought to have died, yet His Godhead was able to give it strength, and to prolong His life. That nature, therefore, could not die, except by permission of His Godhead. He therefore freely died, whether as God or man; for His human nature could have asked, and would have obtained, this strength from His Godhead.

Observe, He died at the ninth hour, the very hour when Adam sinned, and to expiate his sin. The same hour also when the Paschal Lamb was slain, and the Jews offered the daily sacrifice. And this to show that He thus fulfilled all these types in His death. Whence the ninth hour is the Christian's hour of prayer.

Symbolically and Morally: He bowed His head, as bearing the burden of all men's sins, sin being the heaviest of all burdens; to mark His obedience, thus teaching "religious" persons, and those under authority, to obey those over them (conf. Phil. ii. 8); to humble Himself before the Father, to do Him reverence, and to submit His own will to His, even to the death of the Cross; to bid farewell to the world, especially to Italy and the West, for His head, as we have said, was turned towards Italy, which He wished to make illustrious by His faith, and by the Pontificate and martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul; to bid farewell to His Mother; to mark the spot where the spear was to pierce Him; to show that He and His Father were by His Passion reconciled to men. So S. Augustine (*de Virg.*) says, "Behold His wounds when hanging, His Blood when dying, His value when dying, His scars when rising, His head bent down to kiss, His heart opened to love, His arms extended to embrace, His whole body exposed to redeem," &c. It was, again, to show that His soul would descend below, and set the Patriarchs

free; to manifest His compassion. "He made His head to melt," says Laur. Justiniani (*de Triumph. Agone, cap. xx.*), "to show compassion; He bent down to display His grace; He bowed it to show forgiveness;" again, to manifest His love for S. John, the Magdalen, and others like them who were standing by, and to turn away from those who shrank from the Cross; to look away (again) from the title on the Cross, as declining, and teaching us to decline, all worldly sovereignty and pomp; to show that His death, as He was to rise on the third day, was rather sleep than death; for they who sleep bow the head, "I will lay me down in peace," &c. (Ps. iv. 8). Lastly, having fulfilled His mission, He asks, as it were, His Father's blessing and permission to depart from the world. He seems to say, I have finished My course, I have done and suffered for man's salvation all Thou commandest. Permit Me to die, and return to Thee. And I ask, too, according to Thy promise (Ps. ii. 8), that all nations may be converted and saved by My Passion and death. I have done Thy bidding, fulfill Thou Thy word. "Religious" persons and Priests, in like manner, when their mission is done, return to their Superiors, bow the head, and ask their blessing, and their former rank and position. S. Bernard pointedly says, in a moral sense, "What avails it to follow Christ if Thou canst not come up with Him? For S. Paul said, 'So run that ye may attain.' Fix the limits of thy course where Christ fixed His. 'He became obedient even unto death.' However far thou hast run, if thou hast not gone as far as unto death, thou wilt not win the prize."

Verse 51- *And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* At the death of Christ the Creator the whole Creation was agitated with indignation. S. Augustine (*de Cons. Evang. iii. 19*) observes that the veil was rent immediately on His death, to show that it was on account of it. S. Luke, therefore, who connects it with the darkness which took place before His death, speaks by anticipation. Now there were two veils, one before the Holy of Holies, the other before the Holy Place, which the priests entered every day. But the Holy of Holies the Chief Priest alone entered, and once only in the year. Some consider that the outer veil was rent (S. Jerome, *Ep. cl. ad Hedibiam*). But it was clearly the inner one. (See S. Leo, *Serm. x. de Pass.*; S. Cyril, *in John xix.*; Euthymius and others.) But why was it rent? S. Cyril, Theophylact, and Euthymius say to show that the temple was indignant that the Priests, who should have been the first to acknowledge Christ, had denied and slain Him. And that it thus foretold, and threatened, as it were, that they were to be deprived of their Priesthood (S. Leo, *Serm. x. de Pass.*).

Mystically: Theophylact says it was to signify that the temple was to be profaned, and done away with, and set aside, with all its rites and sacrifices (nay, more, says S. Chrysostom, "to be laid waste"). "God in this way made it manifest," says Theophylact, "that the grace of the Holy Spirit was flying away from the temple, and that the Holy of Holies (before inaccessible) was brought within view of all." "For then," says S. Cyril (xii. 27 on John), "Israel fell utterly away from the grace of God when it so madly and impiously slew its Saviour." And S. Hilary, "The glory of the veil was taken away, and the protection of the guardian angel." Hence S. Ephr. (*Serm. de Pass.*) records that when it was rent asunder, a dove, the type of the Holy Spirit flew out of the temple.

to put forth the blossoms of repentance, that they may bear fruit at the preaching of S. Peter and the Apostles (Acts ii.).

Here comes in S. John xix. 31, on which see notes *in loc.*

Verse 55- *And many women were there (beholding) afar off, &c.* S. Matthew says this to set forth how much greater faith, constancy, and affection for Jesus these women had than men. "See how things were reversed," says Euthymius; "the disciples had fled, but the women remained." For women are commonly more holy than men, and hence the Church prays "for the devout sex of women." It was also to point out that they, as grave and pious matrons, were reliable witnesses of what had taken place, and moreover that they had carefully provided for His burial. It was also to show that they had been so drawn to Him by His patience and holiness, that they could not be torn away, either by fear, or by the threats of the Jews, from wondering, gazing, and meditating on Him.

Many women. The Blessed Mother was the chief, the others merely her attendants. She "stood by the Cross," bearing all the pains in her compassion which He endured in His Passion, and with like constancy and fortitude. S. Antoninus says (*Theol. par. iv. tit. 15, cap. 41*), "The Virgin was so conformed to the Divine Will that, if necessary (as Anselm says), she would herself have offered Him on the Cross; for her obedience was equal to Abraham's."

Damascene (*de Fide, iv. 25*) points out the greatness of her pain. "The Virgin suffered at the Passion the pangs she escaped in child-birth." And S. Anselm (*de Excell. Virg. cap. v.*), "Whatever suffering was inflicted on martyrs was light, O Virgin, compared with thine." And S. Laur. Justiniani (*de Agone Christi, cap. ii.*), "The heart of the Virgin was made the brightest mirror of Christ's Passion;" and *cap. xvii.*, "The Son was crucified in body, the Mother in mind." And S. Bernard, in *Apoc. xii.*, on the words "a great sign," says, "A mighty pain, O Virgin, pierced thy soul, so that we rightly term thee more than martyr, for in thee the feeling of compassion was far greater than the sense of bodily suffering."

Baronius (*ad An. 34, cap. xi.*) describes, from Simeon Metaphrastes, her great self-possession, in helping to take Him down from the Cross, treasuring the nails in her bosom, washing His wounds with her tears, embracing His body in her arms, and saying at last with calm voice, "O Lord, the mystery ordained for Thee before all ages has come at length." And on giving the napkin to Joseph, she said, "It will now be thy duty to bury Him honourably in this, to perfume Him with myrrh, and to perform for Him all rightful observances."

Afar off. S. John says they stood "by the Cross," meaning thereby opposite to it, though at some distance. For the soldiers who were watching Christ,

the graves of the dead, have forsaken their sins, and whose hard hearts have been softened to acknowledge their Creator, and who have risen through penitence to a life of grace.”

Verse 53- *Went into the Holy City.* Jerusalem, so called because of the temple worship, of the many saints who had been there, and of the institution of the Church therein by Christ the King of Saints.

And appeared unto many. To the Apostles, and disciples, and also to the Jews, to persuade them to believe in the resurrection. “That by their resurrection,” says Euthymius, “others might be the more assured, by considering that He who had raised them had much more surely raised Himself.”

Verse 54- *Now when the centurion,* &c. Baronius and others suppose that this was Longinus, to whose keeping Pilate had consigned Christ. He was converted by the miracles he had seen, and became a witness and preacher of the resurrection. He is said to have retired to Cappadocia, and there to have been martyred by the Jews (see *Surius*, March 15). Lucius Dexter, a writer of small authority, considers it was C. Oppius, a Spaniard, afterwards the third Bishop of Milan (see Cornelius, *Proæm. in Acta ad fin.*).

Saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

God enlightened him to acknowledge from what he had seen that Jesus was more than man, and God indeed. He had heard that He had been condemned for calling Himself the King of the Jews. But when he saw that God had borne witness to Him by these many miracles, he acknowledged that He had spoken truly. It was thus God’s will that the Centurion should bear unquestionable witness to Christ (S. Hilary). S. Augustine thinks that he confessed Him to be the Son of God not in a natural, but only in a spiritual sense, as a righteous and holy man (Luke xxiii. 47). But others, more correctly, that he confessed Him to be the Son of God by nature. So S. Jerome, “Consider that the Centurion in the very scandal of the Passion confessed Him to be truly the Son of God, and that Arius proclaims Him a creature;” and adds, “But now the last are first; the Gentile people confess, the Jews in their blindness deny, that their last error may be worse than their first.” And Theophylact, “The order of things is reversed, while the Jews kill, the disciples fly, and a Gentile confesses. Now do the Lord’s words (John xii. 32) receive their fulfilment, for lifted up on the Cross He drew to Himself the robber and the Centurion.” Bede too, “The faith of the Church is very fitly designated by the Centurion, for when the Synagogue is mute, it affirms Him to be the Son of God.” Lastly, S. Bernard (*Serm. ii. de Epiph.*), “How keen-sighted is faith! It recognises the Son of God when at the breast, when hanging on the Cross. If the thief recognised Him on the Cross, so did the Magi in the stable. The thief proclaims Him King, but the Centurion the Son of God, and man too at the same time.”

Not only the Centurion and the soldiers, but, as S. Luke (xxiii. 48) adds, “All the people . . . smote their breasts,” in token of sorrow, “and returned.” They begin now

Allegorically: To signify that the veil of legal ceremonies was thrown open, as fulfilled in Christ, so that henceforth both Jews and Gentiles should clearly know God, and Christ, and His Mysteries, which the Jews figuratively shadowed forth in so many ways; nay, more, that the service and Church of God should be transferred from Jerusalem, and the temple to the Gentiles and to Rome. So Origen, S. Jerome, S. Ambrose, and others. S. Leo says (*Serm. xvii. de Pass.*), “There was then so clear a change made from the Law to the Gospel, from the Synagogue to the Church, from the many sacrifices to the One Victim, God Himself, that when our Lord gave up the ghost the veil was violently and suddenly rent asunder.” And S. Jerome, “The veil of the temple was rent, and all the mysteries of the Law, which before were kept secret, were then laid open, and handed over to the Gentiles.”

Anagogically: S. Paul says (Heb. ix.) that the way to Heaven, was then opened, for the Holy of Holies was a type of Heaven, and the veil signified that it was closed till Christ burst through it by His death. S. Jerome mentions that the huge lintel of the temple was then broken (*Epist. cl.*). But Josephus says that it was at the destruction of Jerusalem.

And the earth did quake. 1. That is, the whole earth, as the darkness (ver. 45) was universal. Many authorities are quoted for this. Didymus (*in Catena*) says it was prophesied by Job (ix. 6). Both Pliny and Suetonius speak of a great earthquake in Asia at this time. By this earthquake was indicated the Godhead of Christ, for He it was who shook the earth, earthquakes being frequently ascribed to divine power, *e.g.*, 1 Kings xix. 11; Ex. xix.; Ps. xviii. 7; Nahum iii. 6. In the Passion, then, of Christ is fulfilled the prophecy of Hag. ii. 6. 2. It signified the natural indignation of the earth at the awful crime committed against its Lord.

Mystically: It signified the new heavens and earth (Isa. lxxv. 17), for the old earth seemed to be passing away.

Tropologically: It signified that the earthly and stony hearts of men would be moved to repentance by the death of Christ, since the earth, the sea, the sun, and the heavens, the darkened air, and the riven rocks, proclaimed their indignation at the death of their Creator. But see here how Christ, in His lowliest estate, manifested His supreme majesty and power, that He might not seem to be compelled to die, and that men, learning who and how mighty He was, who was suffering for them such vile indignities with such great dignity, might be astounded and awe-struck. For, as S. Ambrose says (*de Fide v. 2*), “Jesus was wearied by His journey, that He might refresh the wearied; He asks for drink, though about to give spiritual drink to those who thirsted for it; He is hungry, though about to give the food of life to the hungry; He dies, though about to quicken; He is buried, though about to rise again; He hangs on the trembling tree, though about to strengthen the trembling; He covers the heaven with darkness, that He may illuminate

it; He shakes the earth, in order to make it firm; He lifteth up the sea, that He may calm it; He unbars the tombs of the dead, to show that they are the abodes of the living; He is fashioned of a Virgin, that He may be believed to be the Son of God; He assumes ignorance, that He may instruct the ignorant; He is said to worship as a Jew, to the end that He may be worshipped as indeed the Son of God."

And the rocks rent. First in Golgotha. Whence S. Cyril Hieros. says (*Catech.* xiii.), "Up to this day Golgotha bears its witness, where on Christ's account the rocks were rent." And S. Lucian, too, giving a reason for His faith to the Governor, says, "With these, too, agree the very spot at Jerusalem, and the rock of Golgotha, which was burst asunder by the weight of the Cross." Adrichomius (*Descr. Jerus. num.* 252) speaks more fully. "There can be seen even now the fissure which was made at Christ's death, and also the stain of His Blood," and then describes at length its size, &c. But in many other places besides, says Baronius (*ad An.* 34, *num.* 107), the rocks were rent, as at Mount Alverno, where it was revealed to S. Francis that this took place at the crucifixion. He had accordingly a great devotion to the place, and he there received the Stigmata. S. Ambrose therefore justly exclaims, "O breasts of the Jews! harder than rocks, for the rocks were rent, but their hearts were hardened," &c.

Allegorically: S. Jerome (*ad Hedib.* q. 8), "The rocks were rent, that is, the hard hearts or rocks of the Gentiles; the universal predictions, too, of the Prophets (who, as well as the Apostles, were termed rocks, by the Rock which is Christ), that whatever was concealed in them by the hard covering of the Law might be rent open and revealed to the Gentiles. The tombs also (of whom it was written that they were as whited sepulchres) were rent, that they who were dead in unbelief might come forth; might live with Christ who had risen; might enter the Heavenly Jerusalem, and have their citizenship no longer on earth, but in Heaven; might die with the earthly, to reign with the Heavenly Adam." Eusebius mentions that at Paxos a voice was heard, "Great Pan is dead," which he explains of Lucifer, whom Christ destroyed by His own death. Others say that Pan was Christ, being "our God and all," and that the devils bewailed His death, because they were thereby despoiled of their dominion over the world.

Verse 52- *And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.* This was immediately on Christ's death (as S. Matthew implies), to signify that it was wrought by the power of His Passion, and consequently that by the same power death was overcome, and life restored to mankind. So Bede, Theophylact, and S. Jerome, who says, "The graves were opened in token of the future resurrection." So, too, S. Ambrose (*cap. x. on Luke*). And S. Hilary says, "Illumining the darkness of death, and lighting up the gloom of the pit, He robbed death of its spoils, in order to prove the resurrection of the dead who are now asleep." But yet they came not forth from their graves till after Christ's resurrection (see ver. 53). For S. Paul terms Christ "the first-born from the dead" (Col. i. 18), and "the first-fruits of them that rise again" (1 Cor. xv. 20). For Christ by His death procured resurrection both for Himself and for us. It was therefore but right that, when He had overcome death, He should be the first to rise as its conqueror, and others after Him. (So Origen, S. Jerome, and Bede.)

They rose, then, that Christ might confirm the truth of His resurrection, by those His companions who announced it; and, again, that in and through them Christ might manifest the power of His Passion; that just as the souls of the Patriarchs were freed by it from the pit, so, mystically, would men's souls, which were dead in sin, be now quickened by His grace, and themselves rise gloriously at last to a blessed and eternal life.

Did, then, these saints die again after their resurrection, or continue in life and glory? Some think they did die, and are to rise again at the last day, and this from S. Paul's words, "That they without us should not be made perfect." (See S. Augustine, *Epist.* xcix. *ad Evodium*.) Others suppose, and more correctly, that they died no more, but were raised up to life immortal. Because it was but fitting that Christ should manifest at once in their resurrection the power of His own. It was also meet that happy souls like these should be united only to glorious and immortal bodies. But their happiness would have been but brief, and their misery greater, if they had died again so speedily. It would have been better, indeed, if they had not risen at all. It was also but fitting that they should adorn Christ's triumphant ascension, as captives redeemed by Him, and the spoils He had won from death; and, lastly, that He should have them with Him in Heaven, and that His human nature, enjoying their presence and society, might never be solitary and void of human consolation. So Origen, S. Jerome, S. Clemens Alex. (*Strom. lib.* vi.), and others. The words "without us" do not refer to the day of judgment, but to the resurrection of Christ and Christians. (See notes on Heb. xi. 40.)

But it is not clear who these saints were. Probably those, in the first place, who were specially connected with Christ, either by kindred, or promise, or type and figure, or by faith and hope, or else by chastity and holiness; as Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Melchisedek, David, who wished to be buried in the promised land, and thus be partakers of Christ's resurrection. Job, also, and Jonah, as types of the resurrection; Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, and the other Prophets. Daniel, also, and his three companions (though their bodies are at Rome). Eve, also (some suppose), as well as Adam, though Lorinus considers that the Blessed Virgin was the first woman raised from the grave, as Christ Himself was the first-fruits among men. Those, also, who died but recently; as Zacharias, Simeon, S. John the Baptist (though his head is shown at Rome and Amiens, his finger at Florence). Raymundus also (*lib. de Bono Latrone, cap.* xiii.) mentions the penitent thief, though S. Augustine (*contr. Felician cap.* xv.) says, but only by the way, that he was reserved for the future resurrection. There were also many more (especially those mentioned in Heb. xi.) outside Judæa, for "many bodies of the saints arose." For it was indeed quite in harmony with the profuse magnificence of Christ that a crowded procession of the saints who then arose should dignify His resurrection and ascension.

Tropologically: This, says S. Jerome, "is a type of believers, who once, like