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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.

## Matthew 28: 1-9

Douay Rheims Version

*The resurrection of Christ. His commission to his disciples.*

1. And in the end of the sabbath, when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre.
2. And behold there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and coming rolled back the stone and sat upon it.
3. And his countenance was as lightning and his raiment as snow.
4. And for fear of him, the guards were struck with terror and became as dead men.
5. And the angel answering, said to the women: Fear not you: for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

*Met them.* Because they were seeking Him with greater affection and desire than the men. For he who seeks Jesus with fervour finds Jesus lovingly coming to meet him, according to that saying, *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.* So S. Jerome says, "They who thus desired, and who thus ran, merited to have their risen Lord come to meet them, and first to hear the word 'Hail,' that the curse of the woman Eve might be removed in these women."

*Tropologically:* Rabanus says, "Jesus sometimes meets those who are entering on the path of virtue by helping them." Moreover, Eve is to us the mother of perdition and of sorrow. But these women, instead of the word "Eva," bear the word "Ave," because they are the messengers of resurrection, salvation, and joy. Hence we sing to the Blessed Virgin, the mother of Christ, the queen of these women, the hymn "*Ave Maris Stella*," &c.

*Hail.* In the Greek *χαίετε*—that is, rejoice; in the Syriac, *Peace be to you.* For this is the proper salutation of the Hebrews, in which, under the name of *peace*, they pray for every blessing and every felicity. In the Arabic, *Rejoice*, because ye see your Master now alive again. So, after the example of Christ, blessed souls and angels, when they appear to men, cause joy; but demons, and the souls of the damned, cause sorrow, fear, and despair.

*And they came and held Him by the feet.* That is, with reverence and love for His majesty, and with joy at His glorious resurrection, they embraced and kissed His feet. So the Shunamite laid hold of Elisha's feet, praying him to raise her dead son to life again. So the faithful embrace and kiss the feet of the Pope, and of men illustrious for their sanctity. Christ on this occasion allows Himself to be touched by the women, that He may prove to them that He is really risen, and make them witnesses and heralds of His resurrection. Whence S. Chrysostom says, "When with great joy they had hastened towards, they by touching Him received a certain proof of His resurrection."

*And worshipped Him.* With the worship of *Iatria*, as the true Messiah or Christ the Son of God, who by the power of His Deity had raised His humanity from death, as He Himself had predicted when alive. The vision, therefore, of Christ risen confirmed and increased their faith in His Divinity, and in the other mysteries which they had been taught by Him when He was alive, but had not fully understood; so that with Thomas they said, if not with the mouth, yet certainly with the heart, *My Lord and my God.*

cheered them, and at the same time gently reproved their want of faith. For that Luke's account is not the same as that of Matthew and Mark, as some think, is clear from the words themselves, which are evidently different. Also, from the circumstance that in Luke two angels are said to have appeared, while in Matthew and Mark only one is mentioned.

**Verse 8-** *And they went out quickly, &c., with fear.* That is, with a sacred trembling, which was caused by the sepulchre of Christ and the angels, and the resurrection of Christ announced by the angels to them, which came upon them in their sorrow for the death of Christ, and in their thoughts about anointing Him, as a thing not only unexpected but well-nigh incredible; wherefore a new fear was added, lest this vision of angels was only a phantom which deceived them, and lest the body of Jesus had been stolen.

*And with great joy.* Because they had seen the angels, and had received from them the joyful news of His resurrection. Their minds, therefore, were alternating between joy and fear. So S. Jerome says, "A twofold feeling possessed the minds of the women, fear and joy; fear at the greatness of the miracle, joy in their desire for Him that was risen."

*Tell His disciples.* Matthew does not mention what they told; but John and Luke explain it, but in different ways. For John says that Magdalene only said to Peter, *They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.* But Luke says that they related to the Apostles all the things they had seen and heard.

You will say, Whence this difference? I answer, It arises from the women being possessed with fear and doubt, and therefore they told no one anything by the way. And because they did not firmly and certainly believe that Christ had risen, they spoke alternating words, in accordance with the alternations of their thoughts; for at one time they speak of the vision of angels, at another they declare their opinion that the body of the Lord had been taken away.

At this point we must bring into the history what S. John relates (chap. xx. 2-19).

Magdalene, then, was the first to see Christ, as Mark says. Afterwards, at the command of Christ, she hastened after the other women, and overtook them, and then with them again saw Christ, and heard His salutation. So SS. Chrysostom, Jerome, and others.

**Verse 9-** *And, behold, Jesus met them, &c.* As after the courtiers follows the king, as after the priests the High Priest, so here after the angels follows Christ, and confirms His resurrection by showing Himself alive to the pious women. For it was His will that the angels should prepare the way for Him, to this end, both that they might more easily believe that He had risen, and that they might not be terrified, as they would have been if, without warning, He had unexpectedly shown Himself to them.

6. He is not here. For he is risen, as he said. Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid.

7. And going quickly, tell ye his disciples that he is risen. And behold he will go before you into Galilee. There you shall see him. Lo, I have foretold it to you.

8. And they went out quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, running to tell his disciples.

9. And behold, Jesus met them, saying: All hail. But they came up and took hold of his feet and adored him.

10. Then Jesus said to them: Fear not. Go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee. There they shall see me.

11. Who when they were departed, behold, some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests all things that had been done.

12. And they being assembled together with the ancients, taking counsel, gave a great sum of money to the soldiers,

13. Saying: Say you, His disciples came by night and stole him away when we were asleep.

14. And if the governor shall hear of this, we will persuade him and secure you.

15. So they taking the money, did as they were taught: and this word was spread abroad among the Jews even unto this day.

16. And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17. And seeing him they adored: but some doubted.

18. And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.

19. Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.

**Verse 1-** In the evening of the Sabbath (Vulg.), *as the first day of the week was dawning, &c.* How could it be called evening if day was dawning, or even if, as S. Mark says, the sun were risen? Firstly, S. Jerome answers that these women had gone forth frequently to the sepulchre, both in the evening and in the morning, so that the Evangelists refer to different occasions of their going forth.

Secondly, S. Ambrose thinks that they were different women who went out in the evening and in the morning. So Nyssen (*Orat. 2, on the Resurrection*) thinks that the women went four times to the sepulchre. But it is clear to any one who compares the different accounts, that the Evangelists speak of the same visit made by the same women to the sepulchre of Christ.

Thirdly, Baronius by *the evening* understands the star of Venus, which is

called Lucifer, so that the meaning will be, “When Lucifer was risen in the morning before the sun, Mary Magdalene came to the sepulchre of Christ.” But this star is not denoted by the Greek word *ὄψε*, or by the Latin word *Vespere*.

I say, therefore, that by the *evening of the Sabbath* is signified the night which followed the Sabbath. That it was so clear, first, from S. Mark, who says, *and when the Sabbath was passed*; secondly, because S. Matthew is wont to sum up many things in a few words. Accordingly, he here sums up the time when the women came together and made preparations for visiting and anointing Christ, which was in the evening, or immediately the Sabbath was passed; and he also wished to indicate the time when they came to the sepulchre, which was at the dawn of the Lord’s day. For this is what S. Luke says (chap. xxiii. 56), “*And they returned* (after Christ had been buried), *and prepared spices and ointments, and rested on the Sabbath day, according to the commandment; and on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared.*” And S. Mark (xvi. 1) says, “*When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning on the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre.*” Mark is generally the interpreter of Matthew. S. Augustine says, “*Thus, on the evening of the Sabbath* is just the same as if he had said *on the night of the Sabbath*, that is, the night which follows the day of the Sabbath, which is sufficiently proved by the words which follow, *as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week.*” This could not be if we understood only the first portion of the night, its beginning, to be signified by the word *evening*. For the evening, or beginning of the night, does not begin to dawn towards the first day of the week, but only the night which is concluded by the dawn. For the end of the first part of the night is the beginning of the second; and the dawn is the end of the whole night. Whence *the evening* could not be said to dawn towards the first day of the week, unless by the word *evening* the night itself is understood, which is concluded by the dawn.

Matthew, therefore, declares that these women had prepared ointments at night, but came to the sepulchre at the rising of the dawn, as Luke, John, and Mark say. But John adds that they came early in the morning, while it was yet dark. I answer, That also is true, because it was dawn, since the sun not having yet appeared, but only his rays reflected from the hills or clouds, there still remained a measure of darkness in the air.

Peter Chrysologus, in a sermon on the resurrection, gives another symbolical reason. “*According to nature,*” he says, “*it was dark, and yet it is said that the sun had risen, because on that day the sun, rejoicing as it were at the resurrection of Christ, rose before the wonted time.*” Remigius agrees with Chrysologus, “*The dignity of that night is declared, for according to the course of nature evening does not dawn towards day, but darkness towards night; but the Lord by the light of His resurrection made the whole of that night joyful and brilliant.*”

It is clear that these women came to the sepulchre early in the morning; for their love for Christ urged them on to hasten to this, and anticipate the day; and also their fear

**Verse 7-** *And go quickly, and tell His disciples, &c. Quickly*—so that ye may quickly banish the sorrow of the disciples, caused by the death of Christ their Master, and cheer their sorrowful minds, and fill them with joy by the most joyful news of the resurrection of Christ. For the women deserved this favour above others, because above others in their devotion to Christ they had come to the sepulchre. S. Gregory (*Hom. 25*) gives a symbolical reason, “*For because woman in Paradise ministered death to man, woman from the sepulchre announced life to men. As if the Lord were saying to mankind, not in words but by deeds, ‘From that same hand by which the potion of death was administered to you, receive ye the cup of life.’*”

*Tell His disciples.* Mark adds, *and Peter*—that is, chiefly and before all, Peter, both because Peter in Christ’s absence was the first and Prince of the Apostles, and because Peter, as he loved Christ above the rest, so also above the rest he was mourning over His death. S. Gregory adds a third reason (*Hom. 21, in Evang.*), “*If the angel had not expressly named him who had denied his Master, he would not have dared to come amongst the disciples; he is therefore called by name, lest he should despair on account of his denial. In which thing we have to consider why Almighty God permitted him to fear the words of a maid-servant, and to deny Himself, whom He had appointed to set over the whole Church, which thing we perceive to have been done by a dispensation of great goodness, in order that he who was to be the pastor of the whole Church might learn through his own fault how he ought to have compassion upon others.*”

*He goeth before you into Galilee.* First, because Galilee was the native country of the Apostles, to which, after the death of Jesus, they were purposing to return, that they might live more safely among their own relations. Secondly, because in Galilee Christ willed to show Himself openly to all His assembled disciples. For the Jews would not have permitted them to assemble in Judæa. Thirdly, because in Galilee Christ had for the most part preached, and had performed very many miracles.

*Symbolically:* S. Gregory (*Hom. 21*) says, “*For Galilee means a passing over from death to life; for our Redeemer had already passed from His Passion to His resurrection, from death unto life. And He is seen first by His disciples after His resurrection in Galilee, because we shall have joy in seeing the glory of His resurrection, if only we pass over from vice to the heights of virtue. He, then, who is announced at the tomb is shown in passing over; because He who is first known in mortification of the flesh is seen in this passing over of the soul.*” Yet Christ appeared to the Apostles in Judæa also, but secretly; in Galilee publicly.

In the historical order of the events must be brought in here what Luke mentions (chap. xxiv. 3), namely, that Magdalene and her companions, while at the invitation of the angel they had entered the sepulchre and seen that it was empty, yet were affrighted; on account of which the angels

Cross Christ redeemed not only the women and the rest of mankind, but also made the angels to rejoice, yea, even conferred grace and glory on them. And lastly, because by the Cross He reconciled angels to men, and Heaven to earth, “reconciling through the blood of the Cross both the things which are in earth and in Heaven,” as Paul Says (Col. 1. 20).

*He is not here.* “He is not here in His fleshly presence,” says S. Gregory; “and He is nowhere absent in the presence of His majesty.”

**Verse 6-** *For He is risen.* The Greek word is *ἠγέρθη*, which means, He has awaked from death, as it were from a short and light sleep, to light and life. For the death of Christ was like sleep, for He slept, as it were, in the sepulchre thirty-six hours. So also will it be with us. Wherefore, as sleep is a sort of brief death, so also death is a sort of longer sleep. Hence Paul (1 Cor. xv.) does not speak of those who have departed from life as dead, but as *sleeping*, because we shall all be awakened from the sleep of death, and shall arise again to life in the Day of Judgment.

Again, He has awaked as trees, which in winter having been, as it were, stripped and asleep, wake up in spring, when they begin to put forth leaves and flowers and fruit. So S. Jerome (on Mark xvi.) says, “The bitter root of the Cross has vanished; for the flower of life has burst forth with fruit—that is, He who lay in death has arisen in glory.” And in the same glory He will make His faithful ones to rise.

*As He said.* Christ, whom ye all esteemed as a holy and divine Prophet, foretold and promised that He would rise on the third day. Therefore believe that He has risen, for so great a Prophet could not lie; especially since ye now see that the body has departed from the sepulchre, and has risen, as I, who am an angel of the living and true God, most certainly affirm. He Himself foretold the same by David in the 15th Psalm, “Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption;” because, as S. Peter says (Acts ii. 24), “it was impossible that He should be holden of it.”

Moreover, Christ rose before He was anointed by the women, that He might show that He did not need that anointing, since He rose again by His own power. S. Bernard (*Serm. 12, in Cant.*) gives another moral reason,—because He would rather the price of this anointing should be given to the poor than to Himself.

*Come.* “Enter with me into the sepulchre; for your sake, that you may enter, I have removed the great stone.” *See the place where the Lord lay.* That by the beholding of it with your eyes, says S. Chrysostom, ye may see that His body is not here, but has risen from it, so that, “if ye believe not my words, ye may believe the empty sepulchre,” says S. Jerome. The angel therefore led the way, and as a guide introduced the women into the sepulchre, and showed it to them empty, that they might not doubt that Christ had risen from it.

of the Jews, lest if they had come by daylight, and had been seen by the Jews, who were hostile to Him, they should have been ill-treated by them.

Further, Matthew here only mentions directly the time of the coming of the women to the sepulchre, yet he indirectly signifies also the time at which Christ rose, namely, in the early morning, a little before the arrival of the women, according to the common opinion of the Doctors and the Church, which S. Jerome and S. Augustine prove from Ps. lvi. 9, *I will awake early.*

The general sense, then, is, that Christ rose after the middle of the night before sunrise on the Lord’s day, for otherwise He would have been found dead by the women; and as He was born at the same time thirty-three years before of the Blessed Virgin, so now He was born again through the resurrection, that He might as a new Sun of Righteousness shine upon the world. Whence also in former times, Christians, after the middle of the night on the day of the Passover, broke of their fast and keeping of vigil, and began to rejoice greatly.

Further, Christ does not seem to have risen immediately after the middle of the night. For Mark more exactly says that Christ rose early in the morning. And most of the Fathers teach this, whom Suarez quotes (3. p. *disp.* 46, *sect.* 2), and the Church in the Paschal hymn, *Aurora lucis.*

On the first day of the week. That is, on the first day after the Sabbath, on the Lord’s day; about the religious observance of which day S. Augustine thus writes (*Serm. 251, de Temp.*), “The Apostles and apostolic men appointed that day to be observed with holy solemnity, because on it our Redeemer rose from the dead; and it is called on that account the Lord’s day, that abstaining on it from earthly works, we may devote ourselves only to the study of divine things, giving to this day honour and reverence, on account of the hope of our resurrection, which we have in it. For, as the Lord rose from the dead, so also we hope that we shall rise.”

*Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.* That is, the wife of Cleophas and mother of James. These were the leaders and standard-bearers of the rest who were wont to follow Christ; for that there were several others is clear from Luke xxiii. 55, where, among others, he names Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward: and Mark adds Salome. The Blessed Virgin Mother of God did not come with them, because she certainly knew and expected that Christ would rise on that same day; whence she knew that the anointing would be useless.

*Morally:* Learn from this that Christ reveals Himself and His grace and glory to those souls who hasten to anoint Him with the good works of prayer, penance, and charity. Whence S. Gregory (*Hom. 21*) says, “Those women who came with spices see the angels; and so those souls behold the

heavenly citizens who, with the sweet odours of their virtues, approach the Lord in holy desires.”

*To see the sepulchre.* It is very probable that they were ignorant of the watch of the soldiers that had been posted by the Jews at the sepulchre, and also of the sealing. For if they had known of these two things, they would not have dared to come to the sepulchre, lest they should fall into the hands of the watch, much less to break the seal. But God removed both of these hindrances out of their way. Hence learn courageously to undertake works for the glory of God, and certainly to trust that God will either remove, or cause us to surmount, all hindrances that lie in our way.

*Mystically:* Bede (*on Luke xxiv.*) says, “By the women coming early in the morning to the sepulchre, we have an example given to us, that, having cast away the darkness of our vices, we should come to the body of the Lord. For that sepulchre also bore the figure of the altar of the Lord, wherein the mysteries of Christ’s body, not in silk or purple cloth, but in pure white linen, like that in which Joseph wrapped it, ought to be consecrated, that as He offered up to death for us the true substance of His earthly nature, so we also, in commemoration of Him, should place on the altar the flax, pure from the plant of the earth, and white, and in many ways refined by a kind of crushing to death. But the spices which the women bring signify the odour of virtue and the sweetness of prayers, by which we ought to approach the latter.”

The following was the order of events:—First, Christ was in His Passion during about eighteen hours. For on the Thursday, towards evening, He ate the lamb, He washed the disciples’ feet, He instituted the Eucharist, and held a long discourse on love, and at last proceeded to Gethsemane; all which things would easily take up three hours. Wherefore, about the third hour of his death in Gethsemane, He began to be sorrowful, and to pray that the cup might pass from Him. Hence, if you reckon all the hours up to the third hour in the afternoon of Friday, when Christ died, you will find eighteen hours; so that you may learn, according to the moral meaning, how short is the time of the suffering of Christ and of Christians, and how long the time of resurrection and of glory, for it is eternal. So bountiful is God, so brief is the suffering, so long the reward and the glory.

Secondly, Christ dying at *the third hour* in the afternoon, immediately as to His soul went down into hell; but His body was taken down from the Cross, and washed and wrapped in linen, so that He was buried before night, for it was the night of the Sabbath, on which the Jews must rest from all work. Wherefore He was in hell about thirty-six hours (but in the sepulchre thirty-three).

Thirdly, Christ, as soon as He appeared in hell, that is, in *Limbus*, showed to Adam and Abraham and the rest of the fathers and prophets, not only His soul, but also His Deity united to it. Wherefore He gladdened them with the vision of His divinity; then, too, did hell become like heaven. Whence He said to the robber who was about to go to Him in *Limbus*, *To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*

Fourthly, About the ninth hour of the night of the Lord’s day, Christ, having passed

*And his raiment was like snow.* Pure and white. This brightness signifies, first, the purity, innocence, and chastity of the angels; secondly, the joy and glory of the resurrection of Christ.

**Verse 4-** *And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.* That is, they were astonished and stupefied like the dead, as S. Jerome says. For they feared lest they should be blasted, as it were, and killed by lightning. If the angel only by the lightning glance of his countenance so struck and terrified the soldiers, what would he have done if he had laid his hands on them? For one angel slew in one night 185,000 soldiers in the camp of Sennacherib.

**Verse 5-** *And the angel answered, &c.* You will say, How is it that Matthew and Mark speak only of one angel as seen by the women, when Luke affirms that two were seen, who comforted the women with different words from those which Matthew and Mark have? I answer that the account of Luke is different from that of Matthew, and that he relates what happened later, as I shall hereafter show.

*The women.* Namely, the Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and the rest (see Luke xxiv. 10). Those are mistaken, therefore, who think that Magdalene, after she had seen the empty sepulchre, immediately ran back to tell the Apostles, without seeing the angels, and that they were only seen by Mary the mother of James and the rest. John, therefore (chap. xx. 1), while he mentions Magdalene only, with her understands all the rest of her companions; for she was the leader and chief of them all. Eve conversing with the devil incurred death; but these conversing with the angel found life. Sorceresses and witches are like Eve, who, conversing with the devil, drink in death; but penitents are like Magdalene, who, invoking angels, obtain life.

*Fear not ye.* “The word *ye*,” says S. Chrysostom, “carries with it much honour, and at the same time declares that those who had dared to commit that great crime would, unless they should repent, suffer extreme punishment. For it is not, he says, for you to fear, but for those who crucified Him.”

*For I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.* The word “for” gives the reason why they ought not to fear the sight of the angel, but to rejoice and be glad, because they both love and worship Jesus which was crucified, and minister to and serve Him.

He expressly says “crucified,” both to show that he is not ashamed of, but that he openly confesses the Cross and the Crucified, and that he is His servant, because the Cross is the highest honour and glory to Christ and to His followers, and also to signify the fruit of the Cross of Christ; because, says S. Chrysostom, it is the head and sum of blessings, and because by His

Mark is generally the interpreter of Matthew. Wherefore, what Mark says about their entering into the tomb is to be understood thus, when they were preparing or beginning to enter the tomb; for they had not yet entered it, but were still outside, and there they saw and heard the angel, as Matthew has it. For *to enter* signifies, here and elsewhere, an act begun and not finished.

**Verse 3-** *And his countenance was like lightning, &c.* First, because lightning is akin to, and best represents the nature and properties of angels. For lightning is most brilliant, swift, and powerful. For this reason it is spoken of the cherubim who accompany the chariot of God (Ezek. i. 14), “They ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.” And the 103d Psalm, quoted by Paul, Heb. i., “Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.”

Secondly, lightning signifies the glory of the angels, which shines with the lightning of divine knowledge. Again, lightning signifies the glory of Christ rising; for the body of Christ shone with glory like lightning. For angels, when they appear, appear in that manner which is in agreement with the matter on account of which they appear. Since, therefore, this angel appears to represent the glorious resurrection of Christ, His countenance therefore was like lightning. For lightning best represents the four properties of the glorious body of Christ and of the blessed, namely, brightness, impassibility, subtlety, and agility. “For by the resurrection of Christ,” says S. Leo, “weakness has been changed into strength, mortality into immortality, and shame into glory.”

Thirdly, lightning represents the zeal and the anger of the angel against the impious Jews and soldiers, who wished to hinder the resurrection of Christ. Whence to them only he appeared shooting forth lightning, as if he were going to spring upon them; but for the women he tempered this lightning, and showed to them a countenance glorious indeed, but mild. For the Blessed appear to different persons with such appearance and form as they will; wherefore to the women he appeared only clothed with a white robe, as Mark says (chap. xvi. 3). Listen to what S. Gregory says (*Hom. 21, in Evang.*), “In lightning is terror, but in snow is a tempered brightness; and because Almighty God is terrible to sinners and mild to the righteous, so the angel, who is a witness of His resurrection, is rightly shown with a countenance like lightning and with raiment like snow, that by his appearance he might terrify the wicked and comfort the good.”

*Tropologically:* Holy and angelic preacher’s may be like thunder and lightnings, by which the vices of enemies are destroyed. So John and James are called by Christ Boanerges—that is, sons or thunder, thundering and lightning against impiety and impious men.

*Anagogically:* Lightning represents the fire of Gehenna, prepared for the impious Jews and the soldiers, because lightnings are sulphurous, and smell of fire and sulphur, and Gehenna burns with fire and sulphur.

forth from hell with the fathers, came to the sepulchre, and there He showed them His body, livid, blood-stained, and torn for them; and presently cleansing His body from all lividness, blood, and ointment, and again sending angels (though some are of opinion that all these things were done not by angels, but by the soul of Christ itself, which had this power through the hypostatic union with the Word) to gather up the blood which had been scattered by the scourging; and after it had been gathered up, He again infused it into the veins of His body, which the glorious soul of Christ entered, and uniting to itself, animated and glorified.

Fifthly, To many of the fathers, as Abraham and others, He restored their bodies, that He might make them sharers of His resurrection and glory, and witnesses of it to the Jews, as is clear from Matt. xxvii. 53.

Sixthly, Christ, when He rose, passed through the stone that covered the sepulchre. Soon afterwards the angel descended and caused an earthquake, and removed the stone from the sepulchre that He might arouse the watch, and open a way for the women to the sepulchre.

Seventhly, He appeared in glory to the Blessed Virgin, His mother, and showed the Patriarchs to her, who all saluted her, and were filled with great joy. Then He appeared to Mary Magdalene, who had stayed near the sepulchre.

*Tropologically:* Learn here how religiously we ought to venerate and adorn the tombs and relics of Christ, the Martyrs, and other Saints. “The bodies of the just,” says S. Augustine, “are not to be thought meanly of, which the Holy Spirit used as organs and vessels for all good works.”

**Verse 2-** *And, behold, there was a great earthquake, &c.* Firstly, By it was signified the power, magnificence, and glory of Christ in His resurrection as God. For by an earthquake God made known His presence on Sinai and elsewhere.

Secondly, That the women might recognise the angel not only from his glorious appearance, but from this earthquake, and might more easily believe the resurrection of Christ proclaimed by the angel; especially because by means of the earthquake he rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, that the women might enter, and seeing it empty, might know that Christ was risen.

*Symbolically:* The earth which trembled with horror at the death of Christ, as it were leaped with joy at the resurrection.

*For the angel, &c.* Franciscus Lucas and others are of opinion that this angel was Gabriel, who, according to the meaning of his name, is the minister of *the power of God*. It is not to be doubted that other angels were present

with him, and guarded the sepulchre during the three days, and adored the sacred body of Christ lying in it, as being hypostatically united to the Deity.

Further, the angel appeared in the form of a young man, as Mark says, first, because youth is a sign of the never-failing vigour and strength of the angels. Secondly, because the angel represented Christ, who was a young man; for He died and rose again in the thirty-fourth year of His age. Thirdly, his youth showed that he was strong and warlike, ready to fight against the watch. Lastly, youth represents beauty, immortality, activity, and the glory of the glorious body which Christ had assumed in the resurrection.

*And rolled away the stone*, of the sepulchre of Christ. Not that He might rise out of it, for He had already risen while the sepulchre was closed, but that he might show to the women that Christ their God and Lord had already risen. Opening to them a way to the sepulchre, he showed it to them empty of the body of Christ. For as Christ was born from the closed womb of the Virgin, so also He rose from the closed sepulchre. S. Augustine (*Serm.* 138, *de Temp.*) says, "The unbelieving Jews set a seal on the stone of the sepulchre that Christ might not come forth. But how would it be impossible for Him to come forth from the sepulchre who had come forth from the pure womb of His mother, her virginity being preserved? He escaped the notice of the guards; He leaped forth from the sepulchre; He appeared to the disciples when the doors were shut: from the one place He came forth when He was shut in; into the other He entered when He was shut out." So Euthymius, Chrysostom, &c. S. Leo, in his 83rd epistle to the monks of Palestine, says that the stone being rolled back, Christ rose again on the third day, and that the rolling back of the stone was not the cause, but the sign and the proof that the resurrection of Christ was not in appearance only, but real.

We may gather, hence, in opposition to Calvin, that by the same power of God, whole Christ can be obtained under a small host. For if Christ in passing through the stone of the sepulchre could occupy the same place as the stone, therefore in the same host there can be at the same time the great and several members of Christ. The Calvinists, in order to evade this argument, answer that the stone being softened like wax melted away, and so opened a way for Christ as He rose. But this is an absurd figment of theirs, and altogether opposed to the consent of the Fathers, the Doctors, and the Church.

Some think that there were two stones to the sepulchre, the first on the outside, which closed the outer entrance of the sepulchre; the second on the inside, which protected the sepulchre itself. But the Evangelists make mention of only one stone. Chrysologus (*Serm.* 74) says truly, "The rolling to of the stone was a proof of death; the rolling back of it asserted the resurrection." And Severian in the *Catena* says, "He says not 'rolled,' but 'rolled back' the stone; because the stone rolled to was a proof of death, and the rolling of it back asserted the resurrection. The order of things is changed. The tomb devours death, and not the dead. The house of death becomes the mansion of life; it receives a dead, and renders up a living man."

Samson was a type of this, who having entered Gaza, and being besieged by the Philistines, rose up in the middle of the night and carried away the gates to the top of a mountain; because, as S. Gregory (*Hom.* 21) explains, "our Redeemer rising before it was light, not only came forth free from hell, but destroyed also the bars of hell. He carried away its gates, and ascended to the top of the mountain; for by rising again He carried away the bars of hell, and by ascending He entered the Kingdom of Heaven."

*And sat upon it*. Not as if wearied with the labour of removing the stone, but to show, first, that it was he who had rolled away the stone. Secondly, to protect the women against the watch. Thirdly, that he was the guardian of the sepulchre of the Lord, says S. Jerome, so that no one seeing it empty might bring in another dead body, and say that Christ had not risen. Fourthly, that he might terrify the soldiers.

S. Thomas assigns symbolical reasons for the sitting of the angel. "He sat, though he was not weary, as teacher of the faith, as master of the resurrection. The angel laid upon the stone the foundations of the faith upon which Christ was going to found His Church. Or by the stone may be designated death, by which all men were oppressed: by the angel sitting upon the stone it is therefore signified that Christ subdued death by His own power." And Bede also says, "The angel *sat*, to show that now He had overcome him who had the power of death; He had mounted the throne of the everlasting kingdom. He sat upon the stone that had been rolled back, wherewith the mouth of the sepulchre had been closed, to teach that by His power He had burst the bars of hell."

You will say, How do Matthew and Mark say that the angel *sat*, when Luke says that he *stood*? I answer, that by a Hebraism, to *stand* is a term applicable to any position; for it only signifies that a thing is present, whether standing upright, or sitting, or lying. Then, also, the account given by Matthew and Mark is a different one from that given by Luke, as I shall presently show.

You will say, secondly, How does Matthew say that the angel sat upon the stone rolled back, that is, outside the sepulchre, when Mark says that the women saw the angel not outside, but on entering into the tomb? I answer, that the angel first removed the stone which closed the sepulchre, and then terrified the watch who were outside, and drove them away, so that they might not hinder the women from approaching the sepulchre; then, that he entered the sepulchre itself, and was there seen by the women, that he might show them the empty sepulchre, and that Christ had risen. Whence he says, "He is risen, as He said; come, see the place where the Lord lay." So Theophylact. Or, rather, the angel of whom Matthew speaks was a different one from that of whom Mark speaks. So Barradius.

But I maintain that the same angel is spoken of by Mark as by Matthew. For