

Christ Returns in Glory

85.—Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. The body of Jesus Christ was two days in the tomb. On the morning of the third, the guards were startled by an earthquake, that shook the ground, and the sudden appearance of an angel, that rolled back the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre. Their wonder knew no bounds when they saw Jesus coming forth from the tomb, His face shining as the sun. For the moment, in terror, they fell to the ground; then, rising, fled into Jerusalem.

2. Early in the morning of the third day, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, came to the tomb, that they might embalm the body of Jesus. On the way they began to consider how they would roll back the stone that closed up the door of the sepulchre. No wonder, when they arrived and found, not only the stone rolled back, but the tomb empty, they were overcome with astonishment.

3. As soon as Mary Magdalene saw how matters stood, she hastened back and told the apostles, but the other women remained. Stooping down to look into the tomb, they saw an angel, who bade them fear not, for Jesus was risen, and had gone before them into Galilee, where they would see Him. The angel told them also to hasten to the apostles, and more particularly to Peter, and tell them the news.

4. These pious women had hardly left the place when Peter and John came. They had doubted Mary Magdalene's word, and came to see for themselves. John arrived first, but Peter entered first. Finding nothing but the linens in which the body had been wrapped, they hastened back to tell the others.

5. As He foretold, Jesus remained among the dead as long as Jonas had been in the whale's belly. Though dead, His sacred body was not corrupted, for long before had the Psalmist declared: "Thy Holy One all not see corruption."

Jesus was not *raised* from the dead—He *rose* by His own power; and as His body rose glorious and transformed, so shall the bodies of the just rise. Since the Resurrection of Christ, His tomb has remained, and ever will remain, an object of reverence and love to the Christian world.

86.—Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene.

1. Scarce had Peter and John left the sepulchre when Mary Magdalene arrived. Overwhelmed with sorrow at the loss of the body of her Master, she entered the sepulchre. Here she met an angel, who asked her why she wept. She answered, "They have taken away the body of my Lord, and I know not where they have laid it."

2. When she had said this, not knowing it was an angel to whom she spoke, she left the sepulchre. As she came out, she met Jesus, but did not know Him. Thinking He was the gardener, she asked Him where the body was. But Jesus simply said, "Mary," when she recognized Him, and threw herself at His feet.

3. Jesus then told her to hasten and tell the apostles, for He was about to ascend to His Father. Having disappeared from her sight, Mary came to the disciples; but they would neither believe that she had seen the Lord nor that He was risen.

87.—The Resurrection of Jesus is Announced to the Chief Priests.

1. When the guards fled from the sepulchre, they hastened to the city to tell what had happened. The chief priests having heard the startling news, assembled the rulers of the people to consider what steps they should take.

2. They saw that, if the news went among the people that Jesus was risen from the dead, all their schemes to discredit Him would be forever destroyed; so they called the guards before them, and promised to give them money if they would only agree to say, "The disciples of Jesus came while they slept, and stole the body away." The soldiers took the money and did as they were required.

88.—Jesus Appears to Two Disciples while They were going to Emmaus.

1. Towards evening of the day Jesus rose from the dead two of His disciples were going to Emmaus, a little village about two leagues from Jerusalem. On the way they talked of what had happened during the past days.

2. Jesus came near them and began to speak to them, but they did not recognize Him. Remarking how sad they were, one of them, named Cleophas, asked Him if He were a stranger, or how came it that He had not heard what had happened at Jerusalem.

3. They then told Him of Jesus; how they had believed He was the Messiah, and what great hopes had been founded on Him; but, just as they thought his power about to be established, the chiefs of the Jews had seized upon Him and crucified Him; and this was, moreover, the third day since He had been laid in the tomb. They added also, strange rumors were afloat that He was again risen.

4. When they had finished, Jesus began with the prophecies of Moses, and, continuing through the prophets, explained to them the things that related to Himself, showing it was necessary for Christ to suffer as He had.

As they drew near the town, He pretended to go further; but they pressed Him to remain with them, as it was evening.

5. Yielding to their wishes, He sat down to table with them. He took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; but He immediately vanished from their sight.

6. After His Resurrection, Jesus showed Himself no more to the Jews,—they had rejected Him and resisted all His efforts to convert them; He appeared only to His disciples.

In like manner to-day He conies to those who, with a good heart, receive Him, but abandons those who despise His warnings and reject His graces.

89.—Jesus Appears to the Apostles.

1. After Jesus had disappeared, the two disciples rose and hastened back to Jerusalem. Here they found the eleven apostles in a great state of excitement, for Peter had just come in, declaring he had seen the Lord. Then the two disciples told how they had also seen Him, and how they had known Him in the breaking of bread.

2. Whilst they were yet speaking, Jesus entered the room in which they were all assembled, the doors being shut. He said to them: "Peace be to you." And when the apostles were doubting and troubled, fearing it was a spirit they saw, Jesus showed them

His hands and His feet, and bade them touch Him, and convince themselves that it was not a spirit they saw. They still doubting, He took a piece of broiled fish and a part of a honeycomb, and eat it before them.

90.—Jesus Institutes the Sacrament of Penance.

1. When at last the apostles were convinced it was the Lord they saw, Jesus repeated His salutation of peace be to them. He added besides: "*As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.*" Then He breathed upon them, and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained them."

2. In these two commissions conferred upon the apostles we have the most unqualified proof of the divinity of the Catholic Church and the power of the Catholic priesthood. The apostles were mortal, but the Church is immortal; hence these powers were conferred not only on the apostles, but were through them to descend to their legitimate successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church.

3. From the beginning, the bishops and priests have claimed the power to forgive sins; but it is a power they can only exercise in the administration of the Sacrament of Penance.

91.—Jesus and St. Thomas.

1. Thomas, one of the apostles, was absent, when Jesus appeared to the others. But Thomas would not believe on their word, and even declared that, unless with his own eyes he saw the marks of the nails in the hands and feet of Jesus, and put his hand into the side of Jesus, he would not believe.

2. Eight days after this the apostles were assembled, and Thomas with them. Again Jesus entered, the doors being shut. Jesus then bade Thomas look at His wounds and put his hand into His side.

3. When Thomas saw Jesus he fell down on his knees and, cried out, "My Lord and my God." But Jesus said to him. "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen Me, and have believed.

92.—Peter is Appointed Chief Pastor.

1. In obedience to the command of Jesus, the apostles left Jerusalem and went into Galilee. Here Jesus appeared to them at the Sea of Galilee, and again their nets were filled with a miraculous draught of fishes.

2. After they had all dined, Jesus said to Peter; "Simon, lovest thou Me more than these?" And upon Peter declaring how much he did love Him, Jesus said, "Feed My lambs." This same question was repeated until the third time, when Jesus said, "Feed My sheep."

3. By the lambs and the sheep are meant the faithful and the pastors of the Church. There is something remarkable in the manner in which Christ treats Peter: Christ enters Peter's ship; Peter is called the rock. Peter is commissioned to confirm the other apostles; Christ prays for Peter; and, in all the lists of the apostles, Peter is always named first.

This primacy continues in the Catholic Church, and is found in the Popes, who are the legitimate successors of Peter.

93.—The Promise of the Holy Ghost.

1. After this Jesus appeared several times to His apostles, instructing them, and directing them in their future labors. He spoke to them more in detail of the nature and destiny of His Church; of her development and establishment upon earth.

2. On the fortieth day after His Resurrection, Jesus appeared, for the last time on earth, to His apostles, who were then all assembled at Jerusalem. Amongst other things, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem for a few days, but to remain till the Holy Ghost should come upon them; after which they should go forth to bear testimony of Him—not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but even to the end of the earth. This promise was fulfilled ten days after, when the Holy Ghost came, in the form of fiery tongues, and sat upon the apostles.

94.—Christ's Last Commission to His Apostles.—His Ascension.

1. After Jesus had finished speaking, He led His apostles out to Mount Olivet. There He said to them: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on

earth. Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

2. Jesus, having finished speaking, lifted up His hands and blessed His apostles. Whilst in the very act of blessing them, He slowly rose from the earth and ascended into heaven, where He sits, and will forever sit, on the right hand of His Father.

Lost in wonder and overwhelmed with sorrow, the apostles continued to gaze upon Him as He ascended, until a cloud coming concealed Him from their sight.

3. While the apostles were still looking up to heaven, two angels, clad in white robes, came and said to them: "This Jesus, whom you have seen ascending into heaven, shall come again."

The apostles hearing this, fell upon the ground and adored God; then rising, returned to Jerusalem to await the fulfilment of the promises made to them.

4. Elias was a figure of Christ. This prophet was carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot; and, according to the prophecy of Malachi,

he will come again on earth just before the last day.

Adam by sin drew man from God; Christ by His Ascension raised man's thought to heaven, and held out the hope of a blessed eternity.

95.—An Observation.

1. All that has been here related of the life of our blessed Savior—what He did, and what He said—is found in the four gospels. But we must not conclude from this that Jesus did nothing nor said anything besides.

2. It is a part of Catholic teaching that Christ said many things and did much that is not related in the sacred Scriptures; nay, we have it on the authority of St. John himself, in the last chapter of his gospel, that Jesus did so many things besides what have been recorded, that he verily believed, if they were all written, the world could not contain the books in which they should be written.