

St. Thomas Aquinas,
Catena Aurea (Golden Chain),
Gospel of Mark 16:1-7 for Easter Sunday

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming, they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back. For it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe: and they were astonished. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is risen, he is not here, behold the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see him, as he told you.

Pseudo-Jerome: After the sadness of the sabbath, a happy day dawns upon them, which holds the chief place amongst days, for in it the chief light shines forth, and the Lord rises in triumph.

Wherefore it is said: “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Salome, had brought sweet spices.”

Gloss: For these religious women after the burial of the Lord, as long as it was lawful to work, that is, up to sunset, prepared ointment, as Luke says. And because they could not finish their work from the shortness of the time, when the sabbath was over, that is, at sunset, as soon as the time for working came round again, they hastened to buy spices, as Mark says, that they might go in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus. Neither could they come to the sepulchre on the evening of the sabbath, for night prevented them.

Wherefore it goes on: “And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”

Severianus, ap. Chrysologum, sermon 89: The women in this place run abroad with womanly devotion, for they do not bring Him faith as though He were alive, but ointments as to one dead; and they prepare the service of their grief for Him as buried, not the joys of heavenly triumph for Him as risen.

Theophylact: For they do not understand the greatness and dignity of the wisdom of Christ. But they came according to the custom of the Jews to anoint the body of Christ, that it might remain sweet-smelling, and might not burst forth into moisture, for spices have the property of drying up, and absorb the moisture of the body, so that they keep the body from corruption.

Greg., Hom. in. Evan., 21: But if we believe on Him who is dead, and are filled with the sweet smell of virtue, and seek the Lord with the fame of good works, we come to His sepulchre with spices.

There follows: “And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”

Augustine, Con. Evang., iii, 24: What Luke expresses by “very early in the morning,” and John by “early when it was yet dark,” Mark must be understood to mean, when he says, “very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun,” that is, when the sky was growing bright in the east, as is usual in places near the rising sun; for this is the light which we call the dawning. Therefore there is no discrepancy with the report which says, “while it was yet dark.”

For when the day is dawning, the remains of darkness lessen in proportion as the light grows brighter; and we must not take the words “very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun,” to mean that the sun himself was seen upon the earth, but as expressing the near approach of the sun into those parts, that is, when his rising begins to light up the sky.

Pseudo-Jerome: By “very early in the morning,” he means what another Evangelist expresses by at the dawning [Luke 24:1, dilueulo]. But the dawn is the time between the darkness of night, and the brightness of day, in which the salvation of man is coming forth with a happy closeness, to be declared in the

Church, just as the sun, when he is rising and the light is near, sends before him the rosy dawn, that with prepared eyes she may bear to see the graciousness of his glorious brightness, when the time of our Lord's Resurrection has dawned; that then the whole Church, after the example of the women, may sing the praises of Christ, since He has quickened the race of man after the pattern of His Resurrection, since He has given life, and has poured upon them the light of belief.

Bede, in Marc., 4, 40: As then the women shew the great fervency of their love, by coming very early in the morning to the sepulchre, as the history relates, according to the mystical sense an example is given to us, that with a shining face, and shaking off the darkness of wickedness, we may be careful to offer the fragrance of good works and the sweetness of prayer to the Lord.

Theophylact: He says, On the first of the sabbaths, that is, on the first of the days of the week. For the days of the week are called sabbaths, and by the word "una" is meant "prima".

Bede: Or else, by this phrase is meant the first day from the day of sabbaths, or rests, which were kept on the sabbath.

There follows: "*And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?*"

Severianus, Chrysologus: Your breast was darkened, your eyes shut, and therefore ye did not before see the glory of the opened sepulchre.

It goes on: "*And looking, they saw the stone rolled back.*"

Bede: Matthew shews clearly enough, that the stone was rolled away by an Angel. This rolling away of the stone means mystically the opening of the Christian Sacraments, which were held under the veil of the letter of the law; for the law was written on stone.

It goes on: "*For it was very great.*"

Severianus, Chrysologus: Great indeed by its office rather than its size, for it can shut in and throw open the body of the Lord.

Greg.: But the women who came with spices see the Angels; because those minds who come to the Lord with their virtues, through holy desires, see the heavenly citizens.

Wherefore it goes on: "*And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe: and they were astonished.*"

Theophylact: Though Matthew says that the Angel was sitting on stone, whilst Mark relates that the women entering into the sepulchre saw a young man sitting, yet we need not wonder, for they afterwards saw sitting within the sepulchre the same Angel as sat without on the stone.

Augustine: Either let us suppose that Matthew was silent about that Angel, whom they saw on entering, whilst Mark said nothing of him, whom they saw outside sitting on the stone, so that they saw two and heard separately from two, the things which the Angels said concerning Jesus; or we must understand by "entering into the sepulchre," their coming within some inclosure, by which is it probable that the place was surrounded a little space before the stone, by the cutting out of which the burial place had been made, so that they saw sitting on the right hand in that space him whom Matthew designates as sitting on the stone.

Theophylact: But some say the women mentioned by Matthew were different from those in Mark. But Mary Magdalene was with all parties, from her burning zeal and ardent love.

Severianus: The women, then, entered the sepulchre, that being buried with Christ, they might rise again from the tomb with Christ. They see the young man, that is, they see the time of the Resurrection, for the Resurrection has no old age, and the period, in which man knows neither birth nor death, admits of no decay, and requires no increase. Wherefore what they saw was a young man, not an old man, nor an infant, but the age of joy.

Bede: Now they saw a young man sitting on the right side, that is, on the south part of the place where the body was laid. For the body, which was lying on its back, and had its head to the west, must have had its right to the south.

Greg.: But what is meant by the left hand, but this present life, and what by the right, but everlasting life? Because then our Redeemer had already gone through the decay of this present life, fitly did the Angel, who had come to announce His everlasting life, sit on the right hand.

Severianus, Chrysologus: Again, they saw a young man sitting on the right, because the Resurrection has nothing sinister in it. They also see him dressed in a long white robe; that robe is not from mortal fleece, but of living virtue, blazing with heavenly light, not of an earthly dye, as saith the Prophet, “Thou deckest thyself with light as with a garment;” [Ps 104:2] and of the just it is said, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun.” [Matt 13:43]

Greg.: Or else, he appeared covered with a white robe, because he announced the joys of our festivity, for the whiteness of the robe shews the splendour of our solemnity.

Pseudo-Jerome: The white robe is also true joy, now that the enemy is driven away, the kingdom won, the King of Peace sought for and found and never let go by us. This young man then shews an image of the Resurrection to them who feared death. But their being frightened shews that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” [1 Cor 2:9]

There follows: “*Who saith to them: Be not affrighted.*”

Greg.: As though he had said, Let them fear, who love not the coming of the inhabitants of heaven; let them fear, who, weighed down with carnal desires, despair that they can ever attain to their company; but why should ye fear, ye who see your own fellow citizens.

Pseudo-Jerome: For there is no fear in love. Why should they fear, who had found Him whom they sought?

Greg.: But let us hear what the Angel adds; “*you seek Jesus of Nazareth.*” Jesus means the Saviour, but at that time there may have been many a Jesus, not indeed really, but in name, therefore the place Nazareth is added, that it might be evident of what Jesus it was spoken. And immediately he subjoins the reason, “*Who was crucified.*”

Theophylact: For he does not blush at the Cross, for in it is the salvation of men, and the beginning of the Blessed.

Pseudo-Jerome: But the bitter root of the Cross has disappeared. The flower of life has burst forth with its fruits, that is, He who lay in death has risen in glory.

Wherefore he adds, “*He is risen; He is not here.*”

Greg.: “He is not here,” is spoken of His carnal presence, for He was not absent from any place as to the presence of His majesty.

Theophylact: As if he had said, Do ye wish to be certain of His Resurrection, he adds, “*behold the place where they laid Him.*”

This too was the reason why he had rolled away the stone, that he might shew them the place.

Pseudo-Jerome: But immortality is shewn to mortals as [debita, ap. Pseudo-Hier.] due to thankfulness, that we may understand what we were, and that we may know what we are to be.

There follows: “*But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee.*”

The women are ordered to tell the Apostles, that as by a woman death was announced, so also might life rising again. But He says specially unto Peter, because he had shewn himself unworthy of being a disciple, since he had thrice denied his Master; but past sins cease to hurt us when they cease to be pleasing to us.

Greg.: If again the Angel had not expressly name 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.

Augustine, de. Con. Evan., iii, 25: By saying, “*He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see him, as he told you,*” he seems to imply, that Jesus would not shew Himself to His disciples after His Resurrection except in Galilee, which shewing of Himself Mark himself has not [‘sec’, ap. Aug. (?)]

mentioned. For that which He has related, “Early the first day of the week He appeared to Mary Magdalene,” and “after that to two of them as they walked and went into the country,” we know took place in Jerusalem, on the very day of the resurrection; then he comes to His last manifestation, which we know was on the Mount of Olives, not far from Jerusalem.

Mark therefore never relates the fulfillment of that which was foretold by the Angel; but Matthew does not mention any place at all, where the disciples saw the Lord after He arose, except Galilee, according to the Angel’s prophecy. But since it is not set down when this happened, whether first, before He was seen any where else, and since the very place where Matthew says that He went into Galilee to the mountain, does not explain the day, or the order of the narration, Matthew does not oppose the account of the others, but assists in explaining and receiving them.

But nevertheless, since the Lord was not first to shew Himself there, but sent word that He was to be seen in Galilee, where He was seen subsequently, it makes every faithful Christian on the look out, to find out in what mysterious sense it may be understood.

Greg.: For Galilee mean ‘a passing over’ [transmigratio]; for our Redeemer had already passed from His Passion to His Resurrection, from death unto life, and 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 shewn in ‘passing over,’ because He who is first known in mortification of the flesh, is seen in this passing over of the soul.

Pseudo-Jerome: This sentence is but short in the number of syllables, but the promise is vast in its greatness. Here is the fountain of our joy, and the source of everlasting life is prepared. Here all that are scattered are brought together, and the contrite hearts are healed. There, he says, ye shall see Him, but not as ye have seen Him.

Augustine: It is also signified that the grace of Christ is about to pass over from the people of Israel to the Gentiles, by whom the Apostles would never have been received when they preached, if the Lord had not gone before them and prepared a way in their hearts; and this is what is meant by, “He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see Him,” that is, there shall ye find His members.

There follows: “And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed.”

Theophylact: That is, they trembled because of the vision of Angels, and were amazed because of the Resurrection.

Severianus, Chrysologus: The Angel sits on the sepulchre, the women fly from it; he, on account of his heavenly substance, is confident, that are troubled because of their earthly frame. He who cannot die, cannot fear the tomb, but the women both fear from what was then done, and still, as being mortals, fear the sepulchre as mortals are wont.

Pseudo-Jerome: This also is spoken of the life to come, in which grief and groaning will flee away. For the women prefigure before the Resurrection all that is to happen to them after the Resurrection, namely, they flee away from death and fear.

There follows: “Neither said they any thing to any man, for they were afraid.”

Theophylact: Either on account of the Jews, or else they said nothing because the fear of the vision prevented them.

Augustine, de Con. Evan., iii, 24: We may however enquire how Mark can say this, when Matthew says, “they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring His disciples word,” [Matt 28:8] unless we understand it to mean, that they did not dare to say a word to any of the Angels themselves, that is, to answer the words which they had spoken to them; or else to the guards whom they saw lying there; for that joy of which Matthew speaks is not inconsistent with the fear which Mark mentions. For we ought to have understood that both feelings were in their minds, even though Matthew had not mentioned the fear. But since he has also said that they came out with fear and great joy, he does not allow room for any question to be raised.

Severianus, Chrysologus: It is said also in a marked manner, that they said nothing to any one, because it is the part of women to hear, and not to speak, to learn, not to teach.

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St. Thomas Aquinas,
Catena Aurea (Golden Chain),
Gospel of John 20:1-10 = a parallel Gospel for Easter.

And on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre; and she saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre. She ran, therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith to them: They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the sepulchre. And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And when he stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying; but yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen cloths lying, And the napkin that had been about his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, wrapped up into one place. Then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulchre: and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. The disciples therefore departed again to their home.

CHRYS. The Sabbath being now over, during which it was unlawful to be there, Mary Magdalene could rest no longer, but came very early in the morning, to seek consolation at the grave: The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre. [Hom. lxxxv.]

AUG. Mary Magdalene, undoubtedly the most fervent in love, of all the women that ministered to our Lord; so that John deservedly mentions her only, and says nothing of the others who were with her, as we know from the other Evangelists. [de Con. Evang. iii. 24.]

AUG. Una sabbati is the day which Christians call the Lord's day, after our Lord's resurrection. Matthew calls it prima sabbati. [Tr. cxx.]

BEDE. Una sabbati, i.e. one day after the sabbath.

THEOPHYL. Or thus: The Jews called the days of the week sabbath, and the first day, one of the sabbaths, which day is a type of the life to come; for that life will be one day not cut short by any night, since God is the sun there, a sun which never sets. On this day then our Lord rose again, with an incorruptible body, even as we in the life to come shall put on incorruption.

AUG. What Mark says, Very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun, does not contradict John's words, when it was yet dark. [Mark 16, 1.] At the dawn of day, there are yet remains of darkness, which disappear as the light breaks in. We must not understand Mark's words, Very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun, to mean that the sun was above the horizon, but rather what we ourselves ordinarily mean by the phrase, when we want any thing to be done very early, we say at the rising of the sun, i.e. some time before the sun is risen. [de Con. Evang. iii. 24.]

GREG. It is well said, When it was yet dark: Mary was seeking the Creator of all things in the tomb, and because she found Him not, thought He was stolen. Truly it was yet dark when she came to the sepulchre. And seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. [Hom. xxii. in Evang.]

AUG. Now took place what Matthew only relates, the earthquake, and rolling away of the stone, and fright of the guards. [de Con. Evang. iii. 24.]

CHRYS. Our Lord rose while the stone and seal were still on the sepulchre. But as it was necessary that others should be certified of this, the sepulchre is opened after the resurrection, and so the fact confirmed. This it was which roused Mary. For when she saw the stone taken away, she entered not nor

looked in, but ran to the disciples with all the speed of love. But as yet she knew nothing for certain about the resurrection, but thought that His body had been carried off. [Hom. lxxxv.]

GLOSS. And therefore she ran to tell the disciples, that they might seek Him with her, or grieve with her: Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved.

AUG. This is the way in which he usually mentions himself. Jesus loved all, but him in an especial and familiar way. And saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him. [Tr. cxx.]

GREG. She puts the part for the whole; she had come only to seek for the body of our Lord, and now she laments that our Lord, the whole of Him, is taken away. [iii. Mor. ix.]

AUG. Some of the Greek copies have, taken away my Lord, which is more expressive of love, and of the feeling of an handmaiden. But only a few have this reading. [Tr. cxx.]

CHRYS. The Evangelist does not deprive the woman of this praise, nor leaves out from shame, that they had the news first from her. As soon as they hear it, they hasten to the sepulchre. [Hom. lxxxv.]

GREG. But Peter and John before the others, for they loved most; Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. [Hom. xxii. in Evang.]

THEOPHYL. But how came they to the sepulchre, while the soldiers were guarding it? An easy question to answer. After our Lord's resurrection and the earthquake, and the appearance of the angel at the sepulchre, the guards withdrew, and told the Pharisees what had happened.

AUG. After saying, come to the sepulchre, he goes back and tells us how they came: So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre; meaning himself, but he always speaks of himself, as if he were speaking of another person. [Tr. cxx.]

CHRYS. On coming he sees the linen clothes set aside: And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying. But he makes no further search: yet went he not in. Peter on the other hand, being of a more fervid temper, pursued the search, and examined every thing: Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Which circumstances were proof of His resurrection. For had they carried Him away, they would not have stripped Him; nor, if any had stolen Him, would they have taken the trouble to wrap up the napkin, and put it in a place by itself, apart from the linen clothes; but would have taken away the body as it was. John mentioned the myrrh first of all, for this reason, i.e. to shew you that He could not have been stolen away. For myrrh would make the linen adhere to the body, and so caused trouble to the thieves, and they would never have been so senseless as to have taken this unnecessary pains about the matter. After Peter however, John entered: Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. [Hom. lxxxv.]

AUG. i.e. That Jesus had risen again, some think: but what follows contradicts this notion. He saw the sepulchre empty, and believed what the woman had said: For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. If he did not yet know that He must rise again from the dead, he could not believe that He had risen. They had heard as much indeed from our Lord, and very openly, but they were so accustomed to hear parables from Him, that they took this for a parable, and thought He meant something else. [Tract. cxxii.]

GREG. But this account of the Evangelist [tam subtilis] must not be thought to be without some mystical meaning. By John, the younger of the two, the synagogue; by Peter, the elder, the Gentile Church is represented: for though the synagogue was before the Gentile Church as regards the worship of God, as regards time the Gentile world was before the synagogue. They ran together, because the Gentile world ran side by side with the synagogue from first to last, in respect of purity and community of life, though a purity and community of understanding [pari sensu] they had not. The synagogue came first to the sepulchre, but entered not: it knew the commandments of the law, and had heard the prophecies of our Lord's incarnation and death, but would not believe in Him who died. Then cometh Simon Peter, and

entered into the sepulchre: the Gentile Church both knew Jesus Christ as dead man, and believed in Him as living God. The napkin about our Lord's head is not found with the linen clothes, i.e. God, the Head of Christ, and the incomprehensible mysteries of the Godhead are removed from our poor knowledge; His power transcends the nature of the creature. And it is found not only apart, but also wrapped together; because of the linen wrapped together, neither beginning nor end is seen; and the height of the Divine nature had neither beginning nor end. And it is into one place: for where there is division, God is not; and they merit His grace, who do not occasion scandal by dividing themselves into sects. But as a napkin is what is used in labouring to wipe the sweat of the brow, by the napkin here we may understand the labour of God: which napkin is found apart, because the suffering of our Redeemer is far removed from ours; inasmuch as He suffered innocently, that which we suffer justly; He submitted Himself to death voluntarily, we by necessity. But after Peter entered, John entered too; for at the end of the world even Judaea shall be gathered in to the true faith. [Hom. xxii. in Evang.]

THEOPHYL. Or thus: Peter is practical and prompt, John contemplative and intelligent, and learned in divine things. Now the contemplative man is generally beforehand in knowledge and intelligence, but the practical by his fervour and activity gets the advance of the other's perception, and sees first into the divine mystery.

GREG, Mary Magdalene, who had been the sinner in the city, and who had washed out the spots of her sins by her tears, whose soul burned with love, did not retire from the sepulchre when the others did: Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. [Hom. xxv. in Evang.]

AUG. i.e. To the place where they were lodging, and from which they had ran to the sepulchre. But though the men returned, the stronger love of the woman fixed her to the spot, But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping. [Tr. cxxi. 1.]

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