

The Stakes

▪ What We Found

St. Paul stakes the entire faith on one checkable past event: “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor 15:14). We agreed to the Rules of the Investigation, opened the Fact Ledger with what all three of us already grant, and heard what the Church actually claims: a real event with historically verifiable manifestations (CCC 639), whose rising itself no one witnessed (CCC 647). The third-day scriptures we hunted (Psalm 16:10; Hosea 6:2; Matthew 12:40; Isaiah 53) opened the question the whole study will carry: “in accordance with the scriptures.”

▪ Voices of the Church

St. Augustine • *The City of God* 22.5

If the world believed without any miracles, that itself would be the greatest miracle of all. (Summary of his argument.)

St. Thomas Aquinas • *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.6

The conversion of the world by a few simple men, preaching hardship, is a public fact demanding explanation. (Summary.)

St. John Paul II • *Fides et Ratio*, opening line

“Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”

▪ My Verdict (private, sealed tonight)

Complete privately, then seal in your envelope. No one reads this but you, in Session 7.

What I actually think happened that Sunday morning is...

▪ Live It This Week

- Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 once more, slowly. Write one sentence: what is Paul risking?
- Notice this week how you decide what to believe about events you did not witness.

▪ Scripture Memory Verse

if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:14 (RSV2CE)

▪ Before Next Session

Before Session 2: read Mark 15:15-39 once, at your own pace.

Catechism connections for this session: CCC 639, 643-644, 647, 156.

Did He Die?

▪ What We Found

We gave the survival theory its strongest form, including its best texts: Pilate's surprise (Mark 15:44) and Josephus's account of a crucifixion survivor. The same texts turned: Pilate's surprise triggered formal certification by the centurion, and Josephus's three rescued men, taken down alive into expert care, still lost two of three, none scourged or speared. The spear of John 19:34, the blood and water, the unanimous testimony of hostile and neutral sources, and the skeptic Strauss's own verdict (a half-dead survivor cannot found a victory faith) all pressed one way. And CCC 646 planted a thread: the witnesses had seen Lazarus; they knew resurrection, and claimed something else.

▪ Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch • *Trallians 9 (c. AD 107)*

"He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; He was truly crucified, and died... He was also truly raised from the dead." (ANF, abridged.)

St. Melito of Sardis • *On the Pascha*

The earliest preaching did not soften the death; it magnified it: the Master was truly slain. (Summary.)

St. John Chrysostom • *Baptismal Catecheses 3 (Good Friday Office)*

From the pierced side flow blood and water: the Eucharist and baptism; the Church is born from the side of Christ asleep in death. (Summary.)

▪ Live It This Week

- Read John 19:31-37 as if you were a coroner. Write down one detail you had never noticed.
- Notice how often you reasonably trust professional certifications by strangers.

▪ Scripture Memory Verse

Truly this man was the Son of God!

Mark 15:39 (RSV2CE)

▪ Before Next Session

Before Session 3: read Mark 15:42-47 (the burial).

Catechism connections for this session: CCC 645-646, 597, 619.

The Tomb

▪ What We Found

The burial rests on a checkable public figure from the hostile bench (Joseph of Arimathea) and fulfills a detail written centuries early (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57). The empty tomb's first witnesses were women, an evidential liability in that legal world, preserved in all four accounts. And the earliest counter-story on record, reported in Matthew 28 and still circulating in Justin's day, presupposes the decisive point: the tomb was empty, and no source on any side claims the body was produced. We tested wrong-tomb and theft at full strength; both broke on the known tomb, the folded cloths, the psychology, and the silence of the authorities.

▪ Voices of the Church

St. Cyril of Jerusalem • *Catechetical Lectures 14*

Catechizing within sight of the sepulchre: the very place testifies. (Summary.)

St. John Chrysostom • *Homilies on Matthew 90*

If the guards were asleep, how could they have seen thieves? The story refutes itself in the telling. (Summary.)

St. Gregory the Great • *Homilies on the Gospels 25*

St. Mary Magdalene stayed when the others left; love that would not leave the tomb was first to see it opened. (Summary.)

▪ Live It This Week

- Read John 20:1-10 like a detective: what is out of place, and what does each detail suggest?
- Recall a time an honest admission of weakness made you trust someone more.

▪ Scripture Memory Verse

Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him.

Mark 16:6 (RSV2CE)

▪ Before Next Session

Before Session 4: read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.

Catechism connections for this session: CCC 640, 641, 515.

The Witnesses

▪ What We Found

With our own pencil and Galatians 1, we dated the tradition of 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 to within a few years of the crucifixion at most, with Paul's Jerusalem visit to the named witnesses its most natural occasion; scholars across the spectrum agree on the early date. The appearance reports are various in every way hallucinations are uniform: groups up to five hundred, meals, touch, weeks of encounters, preserved doubt ("some doubted"; Thomas). And the era's own expectation (Daniel 12:2; Martha in John 11:24) had no category for one man rising mid-history: grief visions cannot supply a category that does not exist, and they cannot empty a tomb.

▪ Voices of the Church

St. Gregory the Great • *Homilies on the Gospels* 26

The disbelief of Thomas has done more for our faith than the belief of the others: he touched, and healed our doubt in advance. (Summary.)

St. Augustine • *Tractates on John* 121

Thomas saw and touched the man, and confessed the God he neither saw nor touched. (Summary.)

St. Leo the Great • *Sermon* 71

The forty days of eating and touching were for us: the reality of the risen flesh fixed beyond doubt. (Summary.)

▪ Live It This Week

- Re-read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 and Galatians 1:11-24 until the timeline arithmetic is yours.
- Ask someone how they would tell a vivid dream from reality; note the tests they name.

▪ Scripture Memory Verse

See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.

Luke 24:39 (RSV2CE)

▪ Before Next Session

Before Session 5: read Galatians 1:13-24.

Catechism connections for this session: CCC 641, 642-643, 644.

The Hostile Witnesses

▪ What We Found

The two witnesses no grief theory can reach: Saul the persecutor, whose reversal cost him everything he lists in 2 Corinthians 11 and finally his life, and James the unbelieving brother (John 7:5) who ended leading the Jerusalem church and dying by stoning, a death recorded by the non-Christian Josephus. Both attributed the change to seeing him alive. We steelmanned legend with a real legend on the table: the Gospel of Peter's giant Jesus and talking cross show what invention looks like, and the canonical restraint (no evangelist narrates the rising; CCC 647) shows what testimony looks like. The dated creed leaves legend no time to work.

▪ Voices of the Church

St. Clement of Rome • *1 Clement 5 (c. AD 96)*

Within one generation: Peter and Paul bore their witness to the death rather than unsay it. (Close summary.)

St. John Chrysostom • *In Praise of St. Paul*

The wolf became the shepherd; only a living Christ turns a persecutor into an apostle. (Summary.)

St. Jerome • *Lives of Illustrious Men 2*

James the Just, brother of the Lord, governed the Jerusalem church thirty years and died rather than deny him. (Summary.)

▪ Live It This Week

- Read Acts 9:1-22: the same event from outside. What could bystanders perceive?
- Who is the most honest opponent of your views you know? What would their conversion require?

▪ Scripture Memory Verse

He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.

Galatians 1:23 (RSV2CE)

▪ Before Next Session

Before Session 6: read Acts 2:22-36.

Catechism connections for this session: CCC 639, 642, 647.

The Aftermath

▪ What We Found

The proclamation began in Jerusalem within weeks, beside the checkable tomb, and the authorities suppressed but never produced a body. Observant Jews moved their axis of worship to the first day of the week, and every early explanation names the resurrection (CCC 2174). The external dossier converged: Tacitus (executed under Pilate; the movement “checked” then breaking out again), the critically pruned Testimonium of Josephus, and Pliny’s courtroom record of ordinary people dying rather than curse Christ. Gamaliel’s test and Augustine’s dilemma closed the evidence phase: the ledger is full.

▪ Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch • *Magnesians* 9 (c. AD 107)

“...no longer observing the sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord’s Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him...” (ANF, abridged.)

St. Justin Martyr • *First Apology* 67 (c. AD 155)

On “the day called Sunday” all gather: because it is the first day of creation, and the day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead. (ANF, abridged.)

St. Polycarp of Smyrna • *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9

“Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?” (ANF.)

▪ Live It This Week

- Read your photograph of the full Fact Ledger; sit ten minutes; write one private sentence: what does it feel like it adds up to?
- Notice one Sunday this week, and remember why it is Sunday.

▪ Scripture Memory Verse

for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

Acts 4:20 (RSV2CE)

▪ Before Next Session

Before Session 7: bring your sealed envelope and the ledger. Read Luke 24:13-35 if you wish.

Catechism connections for this session: CCC 156, 2174, 597.

The Verdict

▪ What We Found

No new evidence: we read our own ledger whole, then ran every theory against every line on the Verdict Grid: survival, wrong tomb, theft, hallucination, legend, and “God raised him,” each tested with the same severity, combinations included. We read CCC 156-157 and said plainly what an argument delivers (the best explanation of the facts we ourselves signed) and what only freedom and grace can add. On the Emmaus road, two disciples with our same facts and buried hopes met a stranger who gave the facts their frame, and knew him in the breaking of the bread. Then each of us opened one envelope, alone.

▪ Voices of the Church

St. John Henry Newman • *Grammar of Assent*

Real certainty usually comes by converging independent probabilities, supporting one another like stones of an arch. (Summary.)

St. Thomas Aquinas • *Summa Theologiae II-II q. 2 a. 9*

The signs make believing reasonable; they do not compel. In that space, freedom and grace operate, and the act of faith is meritorious. (Summary.)

St. Augustine • *Confessions VI.5*

Most of what we firmly know, we hold on testimony, and reasonably; this opened Augustine to weigh the scriptures seriously. (Summary.)

▪ Live It This Week

- Once this week, re-read your verdict card and ask: is this still my verdict? Amend it freely; it is yours.
- Read Luke 24:13-35 once more, at walking pace.

▪ Scripture Memory Verse

Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?

Luke 24:32 (RSV2CE)

▪ Before Next Session

Before Session 8: read John 20:1-18. Watch for the garden.

Catechism connections for this session: CCC 156-159, 647.

What Rose

▪ What We Found

Not a ghost (“flesh and bones,” fish eaten, breakfast cooked) and not a resuscitation (doors shut, unrecognized then known, “death no longer has dominion over him”): the same body, glorified, the firstfruits of one harvest that Paul says includes those who are his. The threads resolved: the scriptures were one aimed story (Luke 24:44-47), and the witnesses knew the difference between Lazarus and their Lord (CCC 646). In a garden, on the week’s first day, the risen one was mistaken, correctly, for the gardener: the new creation beginning inside the old. The study ends where he ends: at a door that opens only from the inside, and a table.

▪ Voices of the Church

St. Athanasius • *On the Incarnation 27-29*

Death, once the terror of terrors, is now trampled daily by ordinary believers; a tyrant visibly bound is visibly beaten. (Summary.)

St. Leo the Great • *Sermon 71*

The forty days of handled evidence were mercy aimed at us: faith resting not on rumor but on touch. (Summary.)

St. Gregory of Nyssa • *Catechetical Oration*

In the resurrection God broke death from the inside; the undoing of death for the whole race has begun. (Summary.)

▪ Live It This Week

- Read John 20:1-18 one more time, slowly, watching for the garden.
- Tell one trusted person one thing you learned in these eight weeks.

▪ Scripture Memory Verse

For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

Romans 6:9 (RSV2CE)

▪ Before Next Session

The door stays open: keep this table monthly, read a Gospel together (ask about What Do You Seek?), or stand in the back some Sunday and watch. The friendship stands regardless; that offer is permanent.

Catechism connections for this session: CCC 645-646, 655, 988-991, 999-1001.