

Blood and Water

What We Found

- John marks the spear-thrust with his most direct eyewitness testimony (compare 21:24) and two Scripture fulfillments: the blood and water carry extraordinary emphasis (John 19:34–37): the Church has never stopped contemplating why.
- The Gospel had carried the promise since chapter 7: rivers of living water from his heart, glossed by John himself as the Spirit, released at his glorification: and in John, the glorification is the cross. The note came due at 19:34.
- His body is the temple (John 2:21), and Ezekiel saw the water issuing from beneath the temple's threshold, deepening and healing as it goes (Ezekiel 47): the Church still sings it at the Easter-time sprinkling: all to whom this water came were saved.
- As Eve was formed from sleeping Adam's side, the Church was born from the opened side of the new Adam: blood and water, Eucharist and Baptism, the sacraments of new life (CCC 766, 1225). Every font is filled from a birthplace.
- The apostle kept preaching it: *the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree* (1 John 5:8): present tense, abiding witnesses.
- Nicodemus, who came by night, ended his recorded story at the Lord's burial, openly, with a hundred pounds of spices: slow journeys are allowed, and they can end magnificently.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine • *Tractates on the Gospel of John (Tractate 120)*

St. Augustine, closing the circle he opened for us at the ark, teaches in substance that here a door of life was opened in the side of the second Adam: as Eve was formed from the side of sleeping Adam, so from the side of Christ, asleep in death upon the cross, flowed the sacraments from which the Church, his bride, is formed. The door in the ark, through which the saved entered, was this wound's shadow; the wound is the door's truth.

St. John Chrysostom • *Baptismal Catecheses*

St. John Chrysostom, instructing candidates for the font, teaches in substance that the blood and water are the symbols of the Eucharist and of Baptism, and that the Church is born from both: as God formed Eve from Adam's side, so Christ from his own side formed the Church, giving her birth in the water and nourishing her with the blood. And his catechesis urges the baptized to revere the font and the chalice as gifts flowing from that side.

The Church's Liturgy • *The Vidi Aquam (Eastertide)*

Throughout Eastertide, when the priest sprinkles the assembly with baptismal water, the Church sings Ezekiel's vision: I saw water flowing from the temple, from its right side, and all to whom that water came were saved. The antiphon names the temple; the Church's tradition, taught by John 2:21 (the temple of his body), hears Christ, and in the right side his opened wound: so the parish being sprinkled on an Easter Sunday stands, in the tradition's hearing, in the river from the wound.

Live It This Week

- Pray before a crucifix for ten minutes once this week, saying nothing for the first five: only looking on him whom we have pierced.

- Pray the short invocation the Church has long loved, once each day: Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
- If you can reach a Mass this week, receive the wound's other gift: and if you cannot receive, make the spiritual communion prayer at the moment of the chalice's elevation.
- Light a candle for someone who is grieving or dying, and entrust them by name to the opened heart.

Memory Verse

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

John 19:34 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read Acts 2.

Catechism references: 766, 1225