

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. Our Saviour was buried on Good-Friday, towards the evening. It was a law of the Jews that the bodies of those who suffered the extreme penalty of the law on Mount Calvary should be removed before the Sabbath, which began at sunset on Friday. As the two thieves were yet living, their legs were broken in order to hasten their death. With respect to Jesus Christ this was unnecessary; He was dead. Yet a soldier pierced His side with a lance, and there flowed out a double stream of water and of blood.

What disposition is made of the dead body of the Saviour? Providence holds in reserve two venerable men, who give it a worthy sepulchre, such as becomes one which is to arise from among the dead. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, authorized by Pilate and provided with everything necessary for their holy work, take the divine body down from the cross, and, enveloping it in fine linen, they place it in a new sepulchre hewed in a rock, which they close with a great stone. This glorious tomb is to be seen even to-day, in the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, as it was when the body of Jesus was laid there.

Whilst these preparations were being made for the burial of Jesus His enemies were not idle; and as the result of their deliberations during the night they demand of Pilate a numerous guard which they station near the tomb, having previously affixed to it the seal of the High Council (St. Matt, xxvii.). Such were the precautions they took to prevent the disciples from removing the body of their Master; but in the eyes of God these were the means which His providence chose to prove by the very enemies of the Saviour the truth of His resurrection.

The burial of the Saviour is, my brethren, but the prelude of His glorious resurrection: He is buried only that He may rise. So also with us if our death be holy as was His: we shall go down into the grave only to come forth in a little while, living with a new life.