

# The Last Week of the Life of JESUS



13 February  
Rosmini Centre

This year, Ash Wednesday is on 26 February. This year is also the Year of the WORD – of the BIBLE. It would be a good idea to prepare to celebrate the great mysteries of our Faith, by clinging to the WORD, reflecting on what the Holy Spirit wants us to know and meditate about the facts of the Last Week of the Life of JESUS.

This is the reason for this lecture.



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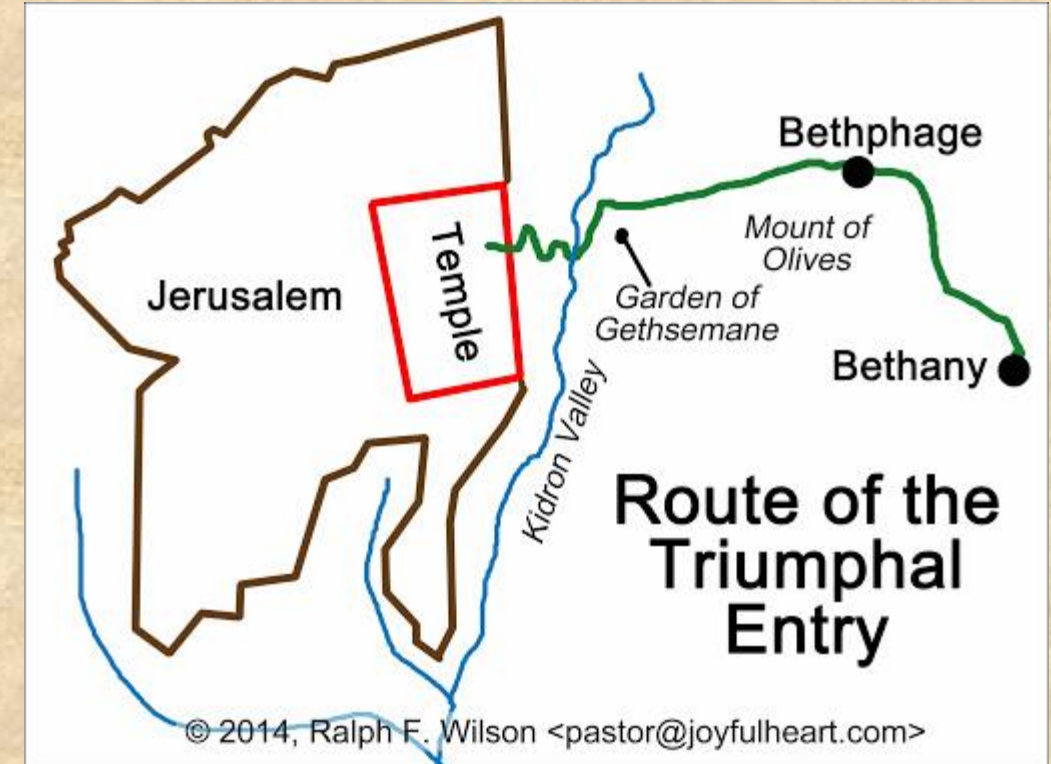
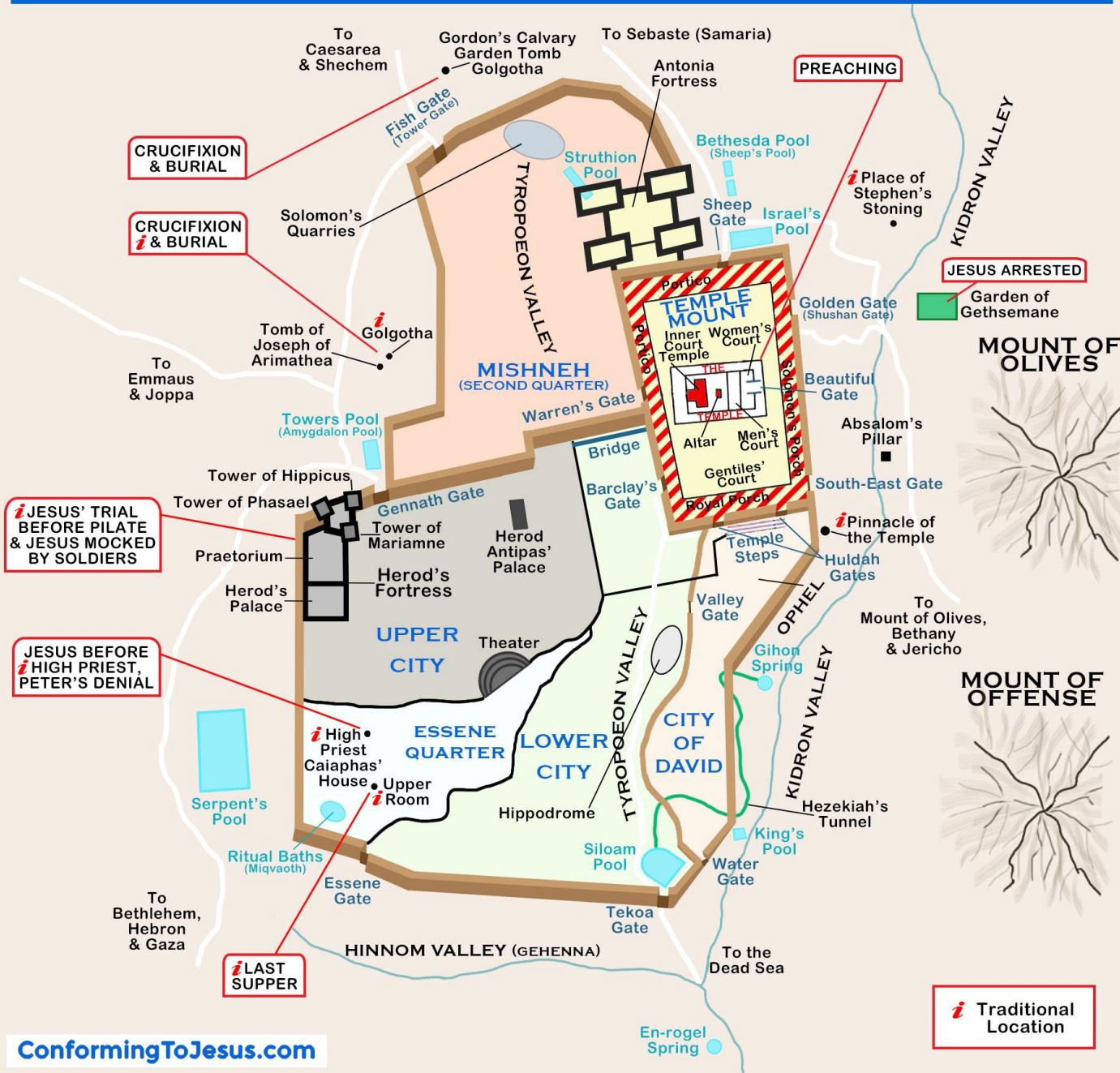
The Apostles, including St. Paul, preached the Passion, Death, Resurrection of JESUS. This preaching was called the **KERYGMA**, the proclamation.

St Mark's Gospel has been called: **“A Passion narrative with an extended introduction”** (Mark 11-16); the same can be said of John's Gospel (John 11 – 21).

The facts of Holy Week were at the centre of the life and worship of the early Christians.



# JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF JESUS



## **SATURDAY BEFORE PALM SUNDAY**

JESUS and the disciples are on the way to Jerusalem. They come up from **JERICHO and make their way to BETHANY**. They are welcomed in the house of Simon the Leper and of his three children, **Lazarus, Martha, and Mary**. This family welcomed JESUS whenever He came to Jerusalem. It was a very convenient place, less than two miles from Jerusalem, on the slopes of the Mt of Olives.

**BETHANY and the UPPER ROOM** were the two blessed places which witnessed JESUS' mysteries of the last days. Two places worthy of deeper reflection.

Tired from the journey, JESUS and the disciples were offered a special supper by the family. **It was MARY who anointed JESUS' feet.**



## PALM SUNDAY

JESUS' most successful  
day on earth,  
welcomed as the  
**Messiah** by the people,  
as the **son of David**, as  
the **king of Israel**.

Back to Bethany in the  
evening.



**HOSANNA, HOSANNA, HOSANNA**

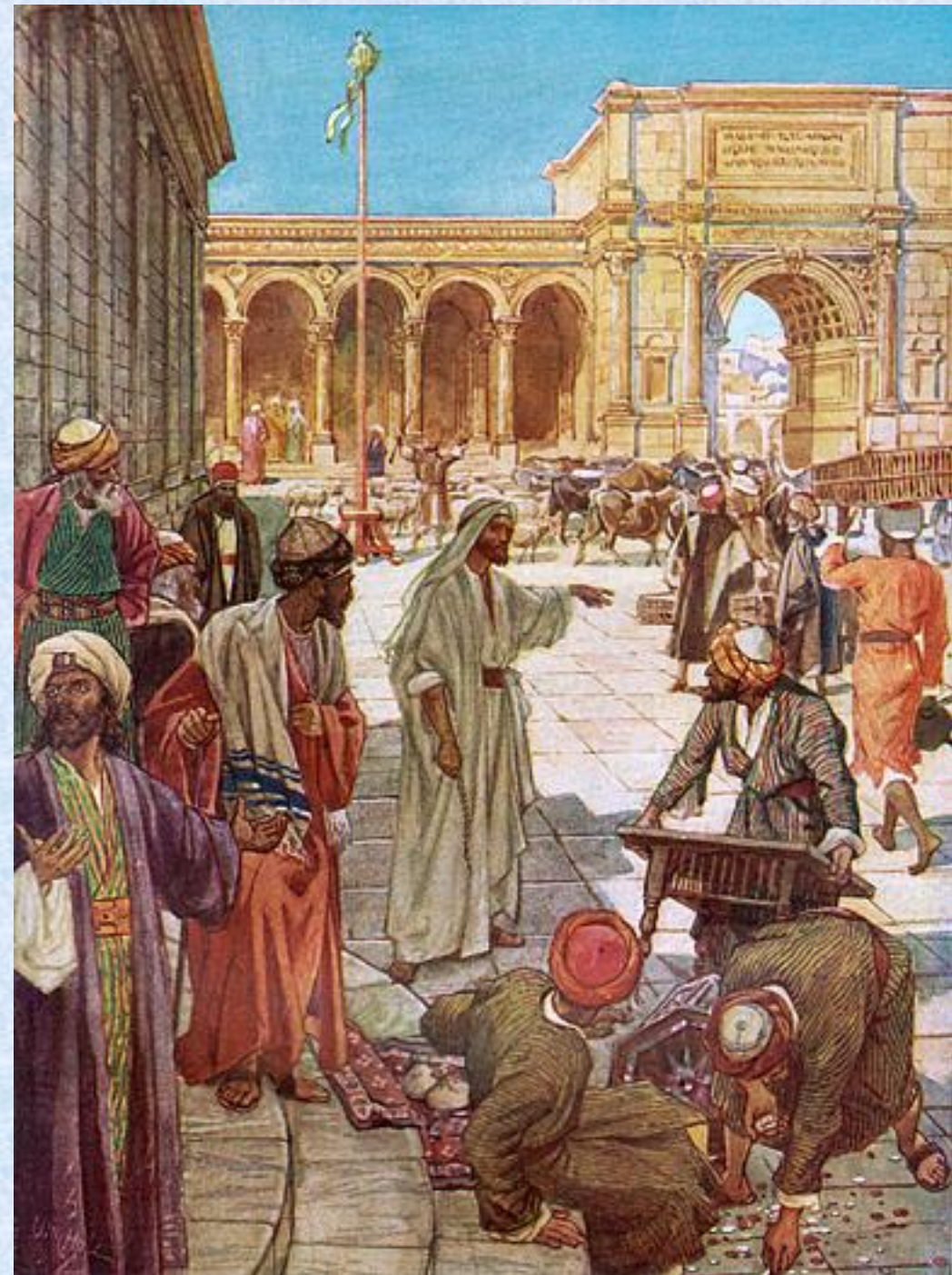


## MONDAY of HOLY WEEK

The story of the **cursed fig tree**, a symbol of Israel as represented by the Jewish religious leaders who kept all the minutiae of the Law but lacked true love for God and neighbour.

The **casting out of the traders from the Temple**. The sacredness of the Temple for JESUS, His home – His Father's House.

Before leaving Jerusalem for Bethany, **JESUS inspects the Temple**.





## TUESDAY

The **cursed fig tree**: a lesson on the power of prayer. JESUS is in Jerusalem and **in the Temple being questioned by various groups**: Members of the **SANHEDRIN**, Scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees, **Herodians**, with the intent of catching Him out: where does His authority come from? Should we be paying taxes to Caesar? Is there life after death? Much more teaching in parables and in Apocalyptic sayings took place during the day.





## WEDNESDAY

Early Christians used to **fast on Wednesday** and on Friday. They had a fast on Wednesday **remembering Judas' betrayal**. It was a warning before the impending persecutions, and it was a revulsion for what Judas had done. His initiative and cooperation was highly appreciated by the Jewish leaders, who had already decreed that JESUS had to die. It was Caiaphas who said, *“It is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole nation to be destroyed”*. During the festival of Passover, Jerusalem would have within its walls **more than 1 million Jews**. Judas' task was to indicate to the leaders JESUS' whereabouts.

## THURSDAY (1)

Traditionally called **MAUNDY THURSDAY** from the Latin **MANDATUM THURSDAY** or day of the Commandment, “**Love one another as I have loved you**”. There is a great theological scholarly debate whether the **LAST SUPPER** was a **PASSOVER MEAL**. St. John very clearly says, “*It was before the festival of the Passover*”; for John, the last supper was a very special meal which was meant to take over the Jewish Passover – like the sacrifice of thousands of lambs in the Temple in the afternoon before the meal was going to be taken over by the Sacrifice of the one Lamb of God, JESUS, who died at the same time as the lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple.



## THURSDAY (2)

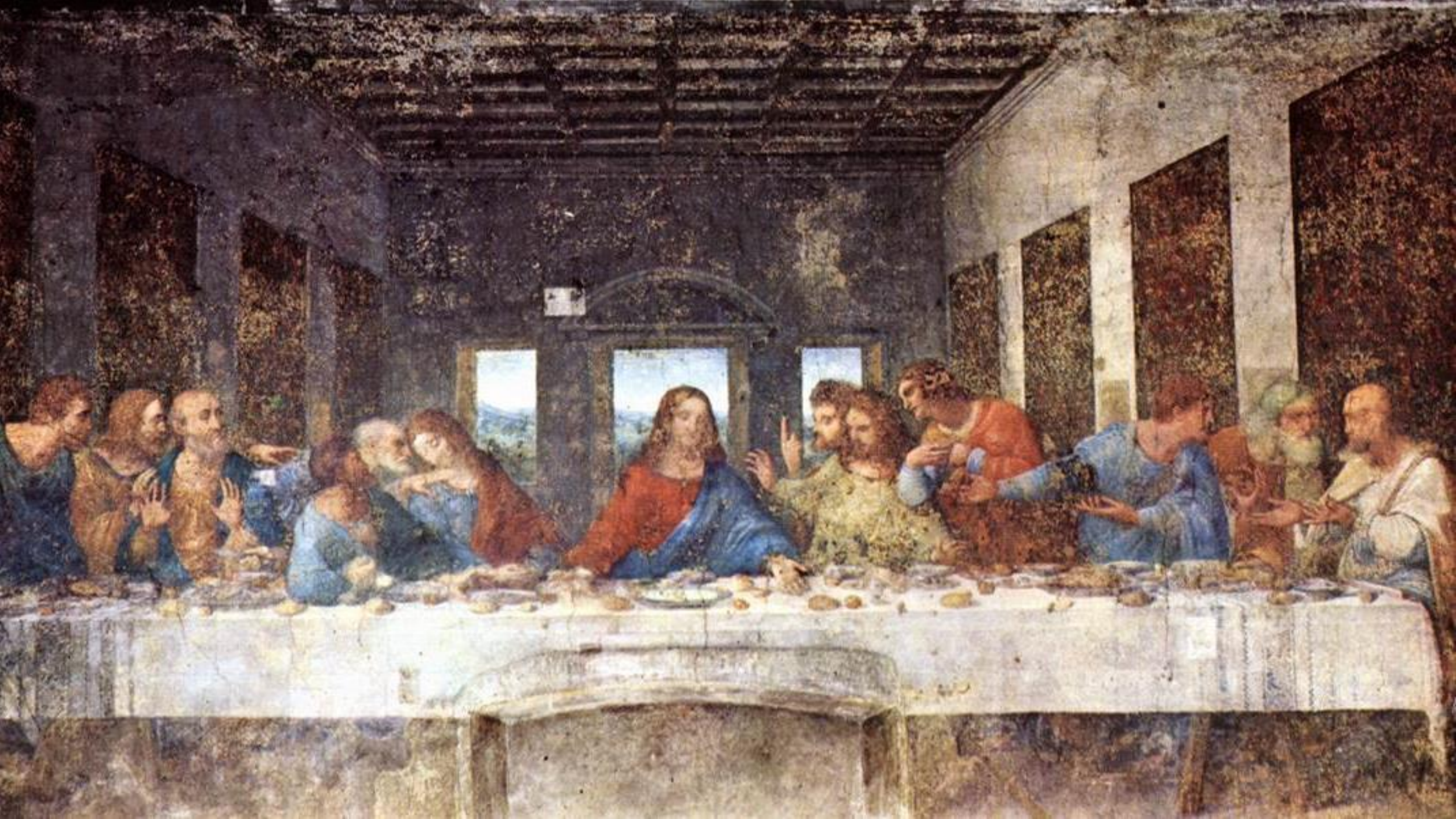
For **Matthew, Mark, and Luke the Last Supper was a Passover Meal**, the Jewish festival which made present God's mighty deed of freeing the Jewish slaves from Egypt. The meal lasted a few hours and was enriched with many symbolic items, readings from the Bible, prayers, the blessing of the bread and of the wine.

The Last Supper as the **Passover Meal was seen through the event of the institution of the Eucharist** – it was most suitable for it. However, did the three Gospel writers report faithfully the order of events? **Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal? Most scholars answer positively.**

Order of events for Matthew, Mark, Luke. They all took place on 15 Nisan,  
the first solemn day of the PASSOVER.

- ❖ **Thursday morning:** the disciples are sent by JESUS to prepare the Upper Room for the Passover Meal. In the afternoon at **about 3pm, about 25,000 lambs were being slaughtered for the sacrifice. At 6pm, JESUS and the disciples gather in the Upper Room for the Passover Meal.**
- ❖ **At About 10pm, JESUS and the disciples leave for the Garden of Gethsemani. The Agony. At about midnight, Judas and the guards arrest JESUS. Three trials take place:** before the Sanhedrin at night, before the Sanhedrin very early in the morning, and before the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate.
- ❖ **At about 9am, JESUS is crucified.** From midday to 3pm, darkness covers the earth. **At 3pm JESUS dies on the cross.** At 5pm, the burial.







## THURSDAY (3)

For St. John, the **official Jewish Passover** Meal began at 6pm on Good Friday. JESUS had died at 3pm in the afternoon of that day, at the time when thousands of lambs – to be eaten in the evening – were being slaughtered in the Temple.

Therefore, **the one true LAMB of God** with His death on Calvary **superseded the Old Testament sacrifices**, inaugurating the NEW PASSOVER which celebrated not only the Passover meal but, moreover, the death and resurrection of JESUS.

**If the meal was not a Passover meal, what was it?** Was it a farewell meal? Was the meal on Wednesday of Holy Week?



## ORDER OF EVENTS IN JOHN

- ❖ **JESUS died on Good Friday at 3pm** – as also stated by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Good Friday, however, was not the Passover Day, but the day of preparation for the Passover.
- ❖ **Some biblical scholars put the Last Supper on Tuesday of Holy Week:** it was not a Passover Meal but a farewell meal. They claim that the many trials can be easily arranged within a longer period of time, given the Jewish rules about trials.
- ❖ **Some others claim that the Last Supper was a Passover Meal which took place on Wednesday of Holy Week** on the basis of a lunar calendar followed by some groups within Judaism, like the Essenes.

❖ Most biblical Scholars today accept the view that St. John followed the order of the other Gospel writers **with one difference** which was dictated by his theological views. He wanted to make the point that **JESUS died in the afternoon before the Passover meal, when the lambs were being slaughtered**, to show that JESUS is the true LAMB OF GOD who takes away the sin of the world. **The Last Supper was for John the one true Passover of the New Covenant, which did away with the old Jewish Passover.**



## THURSDAY (4)

Who were the **QUARTODECIMANS**? They were Christians who celebrated the feast of **EASTER** on the 14 Nisan, that is, on the lunar calendar which fixed the **PASSOVER MEAL** on the Wednesday of every year – always on the 14 Nisan. Apparently, St. John and many other churches in the East followed this tradition, according to **St. Irenaeus** (died in 150AD).

**They celebrated all the events of the Triduum on the same day, the day of the Passover: the Eucharist, the Death, the Resurrection. They did not celebrate Easter on the Sunday.**

There was a period of acceptance of their stand, but slowly they began to be condemned for failing to comply with Rome and the other Churches. **By the fifth century, they practically disappeared.**

## THE UPPER ROOM

Possibly a large upstairs room in the house of the **family of the young JOHN MARK**. Great events took place in there: the institution of the **EUCHARIST**, the washing of the feet and the great commandment, the **Resurrection appearances** on Easter Day, the descent of the **Holy Spirit** at Pentecost.

We also have the prophecy of **JUDAS' betrayal**, of **PETER's denials**; and the unbelief of **THOMAS**.

It is also likely that the **“garden” of Gethsemani belonged to the family**, thus explaining the puzzling inclusion in the Gospel of Mark of the young man who run away naked from the guards who wanted to arrest him.



## FRIDAY OF HOLY WEEK

The day CHRIST died on the Cross, for all the Evangelists. After the **HOSANNA** of Palm Sunday, we have on this day the **CRUCIFIGE** of the crowds. The day of apparent victory of the Devil, the day of the **greatest manifestation of love on God's part for fallen humanity**. We know the events; we cover them as we do the Stations of the Cross.

That day is to be treasured by humanity and **by me**: it was personal, God died for me, to show me His love, to forgive my sins, to grant me eternal life. It was a true Passover, from slavery of sin to the freedom of the children of God, from death to life, from evil to goodness.

# FRIDAY OF HOLY WEEK

**The last seven “words” from the Cross:** “My God, my God why have Thou forsaken me?”; “I am thirsty”; “Father forgive them, they know not what they are doing”; “Woman, behold your son – Behold your Mother”; “Today you will be in Paradise with Me”; “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; “Consummatum est”.



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## SATURDAY OF HOLY WEEK

What body did JESUS have from Friday 3pm until Sunday morning? It was not His earthly body; it was not His glorious body. It was **His Eucharistic Body** – the true body He gave the disciples at the Last Supper when He told them: “**This is my body, broken up for you**” and “**This is my blood poured out for you**”.

It was with **His mysterious Eucharistic Body** that JESUS raised to the glory of Heaven the souls of the just people of the Old Testament waiting in Hades: **they received life by the power of JESUS’ eucharistic Body**.

It will be **JESUS’ eucharistic body** that will keep us **alive** when our body dies, until the final resurrection of the body; it is JESUS’ eucharistic body that gives life to the **souls in Purgatory, and to the Angels and Saints in Heaven**. This is what the priest says at Mass, when he prays during the Canon for the souls in Purgatory, and remembers the Angels and the Saints, and prays for the people on earth – the union of the Suffering, Militant, and Triumphant Church in the Body of CHRIST.

## EASTER SUNDAY

“If Christ has not risen from the dead, your faith is in vain.... But Christ has indeed risen from the dead, and was seen by many” (St Paul to the Corinthians)

- **Women** saw the Risen Christ first, and were the first to announce His Resurrection
- There was a **natural, simple, poetic unfolding of the event of the Resurrection – very similar in its manifestation to the Birth’s stories**
  - **John** was the first to “believe”, even without seeing the risen Christ
  - There are “**empty tomb**” stories and there are “**apparition stories**”
- Apparitions took place in Jerusalem, in the **Upper Room** on Easter Sunday, and on the way to Emmaus. Some apparitions took place **in Galilee**. Many other apparitions are mentioned by St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians.
- On Easter day JESUS gives His Apostles the **power to forgive sins** as He gives them the Holy Spirit.







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NEXT LECTURE

9<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020

St. Paul's Masterpiece:  
THE LETTER TO THE  
ROMANS