

John: 20:19–31

From Catena Aurea:

19. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

21. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

22. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

23. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

24. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvi) The disciples, when they heard what Mary told them, were obliged either to disbelieve, or, if they believed, to grieve that He did not count them worthy to have the sight of Him. He did not let them however pass a whole day in such reflections, but in the midst of their longing trembling desires to see Him, presented Himself to them: Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews.

THEOPHYLACT. Or because He waited till all were assembled: and with shut doors, that he might shew how that in the very same way he had risen again, i. e. with the stone lying on the scpulchre.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. cx. et cl. Pasch. aliquid simile.) Some are strongly indisposed to believe this miracle, and argue thus: If the same body rose again, which hung upon the Cross, how could that body enter

through shut doors? But if thou comprehendest the mode, it is no miracle: when reason fails, then is faith edified.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cxx) The shut door did not hinder the body, wherein Divinity resided. He could enter without open doors, who was born without a violation of His mother's virginity.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvi) It is wonderful that they did not think him a phantom. But Mary had provided against this, by the faith she had wrought in them. And He Himself too shewed Himself so openly, and strengthened their wavering minds by His voice: And saith unto them, Peace be unto you, i. e. Be not disturbed. Wherein too He reminds them of what He had said before His crucifixion; My peace I give to you; (c. 14:27; 16:33) and again, In Me ye shall have peace.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cxxi) The nails had pierced His hands, the lance had pierced His side. For the healing of doubting hearts, the marks of the wounds were still preserved.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvi) And what He had promised before the crucifixion, I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, is now fulfilled: Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

AUGUSTINE. (de Civ. Dei.) The glory, wherewith the righteous shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, i. e. in Christ's body, we must believe to have been rather veiled than not to have been there at all. He accommodated His presence to man's weak sight, and presented Himself in such form, as that His disciple could look at and recognise Him.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvi) All these things brought them to a most confident faith. As they were in endless war with the Jews, He says again, Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvi. 3) At the same time He shews the efficacy of the cross, by which He undoes all evil things, and gives all good things; which is peace. To the women above there was announced joy; for that sex was in sorrow, and had received the curse, In sorrow shalt thou bring forth. (Gen. 3:16) All hindrances then being removed, and every thing made straight, (πατωρθωται.) he adds, As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cxxi) We have learnt that the Son is equal to the Father: here He shews Himself Mediator; He Me, and I you.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvi. 2) Having then given them confidence by His own miracles, and appealing to Him who sent Him, He uses a prayer to the Father, but of His own authority gives them power: And when He had said thus, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

AUGUSTINE. (iv. de Trin. c. xx) That corporeal breath was not the substance of the Holy Ghost, but to shew, by meet symbol, that the Holy Ghost proceeded not only from the Father, but the Son. For who would be so mad as to say, that it was one Spirit which He gave by breathing, and another which He sent after His ascension?

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvi) Some say that by breathing He did not give them the Spirit, but made them meet to receive the Spirit. For if Daniel's senses were so overpowered by the sight of the Angel, how would they have been overwhelmed in receiving that unutterable gift, if He had not first prepared them for it! It would not be wrong however to say that they received then the gift of a certain spiritual power, not to raise the dead and do miracles, but to remit sins: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cxxi. 3) The love of the Church, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, remits the sins of those who partake of it; but retains the sins of those who do not. Where then He has said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, He instantly makes mention of the remission and retaining of sins.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvi. 4) A priest though he may have ordered well his own life, yet, if he have not exercised proper vigilance over others, is sent to hell with the evil doers. Wherefore, knowing the greatness of their danger, pay them all respect, even though they be not men of notable goodness. For they who are in rule, should not be judged by those who are under them. And their incorrectness of life will not at all invalidate what they do by commission from God. For not only cannot a priest, but not even angel or archangel, do any thing of themselves; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do all. The priest only furnishes the tongue, and the hand. For it were not just that the salvation of those who come to the Sacraments in faith, should be endangered by another's wickedness. (Hom. lxxxvii. 1). At the assembly of the disciples all were present but Thomas, who probably had not returned from the dispersion: But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvii. 1) As to believe directly, (ἀπλῶς) and any how, is the mark of too easy a mind, so is too much enquiring of a gross one: and this is Thomas's fault. For when the Apostle said, We have seen the Lord, he did not believe, not because he discredited them, but from an idea of the impossibility of the thing itself: The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But

he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe. Being the grossest of all, he required the evidence of the grossest sense, viz. the touch, and would not even believe his eyes: for he does not say only, Except I shall see, but adds, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side.

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26. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you,

27. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

30. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvii) Consider the mercy of the Lord, how for the sake of one soul, He exhibits His wounds. And yet the disciples deserved credit, and He had Himself foretold the event. Notwithstanding, because one person, Thomas, would examine Him, Christ allowed him. But He did not appear to him immediately, but waited till the eighth day, in order that the admonition being given in the presence of the disciples, might kindle in him greater desire, and strengthen his faith for the future. And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

AUGUSTINE. (in Serm. Tap. ad Cat. ii. 8.) You ask; If He entered by the shut door, where is the nature of His body? (ubi est modus corporis.) And I reply; If He walked on the sea, where is the weight of His body? The Lord did that as the Lord; and did He, after His resurrection, cease to be the Lord?

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvii. 1) Jesus then comes Himself, and does not wait till Thomas interrogates Him. But to shew that He heard what Thomas said to the disciples, He uses the same words. And first He rebukes him; Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: secondly, He admonishes him; And be not faithless, but believing. Note how that before they receive the Holy Ghost faith wavers, but afterward is firm. We may wonder how an incorruptible body could retain the marks of the nails. But it was done in condescension; in order that they might be sure that it was the very person Who was crucified.

AUGUSTINE. (de Symb. ad Cat. ii. 8) He might, had He pleased, have wiped all spot and trace of wound from His glorified body; but He had reasons for retaining them. He shewed them to Thomas, who would not believe except he saw and touched; and He will shew them to His enemies, not to say, as He did to Thomas, Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed, but to convict them: Behold the Man whom ye crucified, see the wounds which ye inflicted, recognise the side which ye pierced, that it was by you, and for you, that it was opened, and yet ye cannot enter there.

AUGUSTINE. (xxii. Civ. Dei, xix) We are, as I know not how, afflicted with such love for the blessed martyrs, that we would wish in that kingdom to see on their bodies the marks of those wounds which they have borne for Christ's sake. And perhaps we shall see them; for they will not have deformity, but dignity, and, though on the body, shine forth not with bodily, but with spiritual beauty (virtutis). Nor yet, if any of the limbs of martyrs have been cut off, shall they therefore appear without them in the resurrection of the dead; for it is said, There shall not an hair of your head perish. But if it be fit that in that new world, the traces of glorious wounds should still be preserved on the immortal flesh, in the places where the limbs were cut off there, though those same limbs withal be not lost but restored, shall the wounds appear. For though all the blemishes of the body shall then be no more, yet the evidences of virtue are not to be called blemishes.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cxxi) Thomas saw and touched the man, and confessed the God whom he neither saw nor touched. By means of the one he believed the other undoubtingly: Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.

THEOPHYLACT. He who had been before unbelieving, after touching the body shewed himself the best divine; for he asserted the twofold nature and one Person of Christ; by saying, My Lord, the human nature, by saying, My God, the divine, and by joining them both, confessed that one and the same Person was Lord and God.

Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cxxi) He saith not, Hast touched me, but, hast seen me; the sight being a kind of general sense, and put in the place often of the other four senses; as when we say, Hear, and see how well it sounds; smell, and see how sweet it smells; taste, and see how well it tastes; touch, and see how warm it is. Wherefore also our Lord says, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands. What is this but, Touch and see? And yet he had not eyes in his finger. He refers them both to seeing and to touching, when He says, Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed. Although it might be said, that the disciple did not dare to touch, what was offered to be touched.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. cxxi) He uses the past tense, the future to His knowledge having already taken place by His own predestination.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvii) If any one then says, Would that I had lived in those times, and seen Christ doing miracles! let him reflect, Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

THEOPHYLACT. Here He means the disciples who had believed without seeing the print of the nails, and His side.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxxxvii) John having related less than the other Evangelists, adds, And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. Yet neither did the others relate all, but only what was sufficient for the purpose of convincing men. He probably here refers to the miracles which our Lord did after His resurrection, and therefore says, In the presence of His disciples, and they being the only persons with whom He conversed after His resurrection. Then to let you understand, that the miracles were not done for the sake of the disciples only, He adds, But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; addressing Himself to mankind generally. And, this belief, he then says, profits ourselves, not Him in Whom we believe. And that believing ye might have life through His name, i. e. through Jesus, which is life.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

20:19a Evening of the First Day and Locked Doors

An Evening More by Grief Than by Time.

Peter Chrysologus: It was evening more by grief than by time. It was evening for minds darkened by the somber cloud of grief and sadness because although the report of the resurrection had given the slight glimmer of twilight, nevertheless the Lord had not yet shone through with his light in all its brilliance. Sermon 84.2.

Jesus Does Not Delay.

Chrysostom: It was likely that when the disciples heard these things from Mary they would either not believe the woman—or if they did believe her, they would be sad that he had not considered them worthy of such a vision even though he promised to meet them in Galilee. Since this was so, he did not let a single day pass so that they might not dwell on this and become distracted. Rather, he brought them to a state of longing by their knowledge that he was risen and by what they heard from the woman. And when they were thirsting to see him and were greatly afraid (which especially made their yearning greater), he then, when it was evening, presented himself before them. And he did so in a very marvelous way. And why did he appear in the “evening”? Because that was probably when they would be especially fearful. Homilies on the Gospel of John 86.2.

Doors and Hearts Are Locked.

Peter Chrysologus: The extent of their terror and the disquiet caused by such an atrocity had simultaneously locked the house and the hearts of the disciples and had so completely prevented light from having any access that for their senses, overwhelmed more and more by grief, the murkiness of night increased and became more pervasive. No darkness of night can be compared with the gloom of grief and fear because they are incapable of being tempered by any light of either consolation or counsel. Sermon 84.2.

The State of Our Resurrected Bodies.

Augustine: But since you have repeatedly asked me what I thought about the resurrection of bodies and the future functions of the members in that incorruptibility and immortality, listen briefly to what could with the Lord's help be further discussed. We must hold most firmly that point on which the statement of the holy Scripture is truthful and clear, namely, that these visible and earthly bodies that are now called natural will be spiritual in the resurrection of the faithful and righteous. But I do not know how the character of a spiritual body, unknown as it is to us, can be either comprehended or taught. Certainly there will be no corruption in them, and for this reason they will not then need this corruptible food that they now need. They will, nonetheless, be able to take and really consume such food, not out of need. Otherwise, the Lord would not have taken food after his resurrection. And he offered us an example of bodily resurrection so that the apostle says of him, "If the dead will not rise, neither has Christ risen." When he appeared with all the members of his body and used their functions, he also displayed the places of his wounds. I have always taken these as scars, not as actual wounds, and saw them as the result of his power, not of some necessity. He revealed the ease of this power, especially when he either showed himself in another form or appeared as his real self to the disciples gathered in the house when the doors were closed. Letter 95.7.

Jesus Is Truly God.

Gregory of Nyssa: He did not remain in death's power. The wounds that his body had received from the iron of the nails and spear offered no impediment to his rising again. After his resurrection he showed himself whenever he wanted to his disciples. When he wished to be present with them, he was in their midst without being seen, needing no entrance through open doors.... All of these occurrences, and whatever other similar facts we know about his life, require no further argument to show that they are signs of deity and of a sublime and supreme power. The Great Catechism 32.

Death's Power Banished from the Body.

Cyril of Alexandria: By his unexpected entry through closed doors Christ proved once more that by nature he was God and also that he was none other than the one who had lived among them. By showing his wounded side and the marks of the nails, he convinced us beyond a doubt that he had raised the temple of his body, the very body that had hung on the cross. He restored that body that he had worn, destroying death's power over all flesh, for as God, he was life itself. Why would he need to show them his hands

and side if, as some perversely think, he did not rise again bodily? And if the goal was not to have the disciples think about him in this way, why not appear in another form and, disdaining any likeness of the flesh, conjure up other thoughts in their minds? But he obviously thought it was that important to convince them of the resurrection of his body that, even when events would have seemed to call for him to change the mode of his body into some more ineffable and surpassing majesty, he nonetheless resolved in his providence to appear once more as he had been in the past [i.e., in the flesh] so that they might realize he was wearing no other form than the one in which he had suffered crucifixion. Our eyes could not have endured the glory of his holy body, if he had chosen to reveal it to his disciples before he ascended to the Father. Anyone who reflects on the transfiguration will easily infer this is the case.... since, it says, they could not endure the sight but fell on their faces. Commentary on the Gospel of John 12:1.

20:19b Peace Be With You

The Spirit Breathes Tranquility.

Maximus the Confessor: Through his greeting of peace he breathes on them and bestows tranquility as well as a sharing in the Holy Spirit. Chapters on Knowledge 2.46.

The Peace of Christ.

Cyril of Alexandria: When Christ greeted his holy disciples with the words “peace be with you,” by peace he meant himself, for Christ’s presence always brings tranquility of soul. This is the grace Paul desired for believers when he wrote, “The peace of Christ which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds.” The peace of Christ which passes all understanding is in fact the Spirit of Christ, who fills those who share in him with every blessing. Commentary on the Gospel of John 12:1.

20:20 Jesus’ Hands and Side and the Disciples’ Rejoicing

A True Bodily Resurrection.

Irenaeus: As Christ rose in the substance of flesh and pointed out to his disciples the mark of the nails and the opening in his side (now these are the tokens of that flesh that rose from the dead), so “shall he also,” it is said, “raise us up by his own power.” What, then, are mortal bodies? Can they be souls? Not at all, for souls are incorporeal when compared with mortal bodies.... We must therefore conclude that it is in

reference to the flesh that death is mentioned. This [flesh], after the soul's departure, becomes breathless and inanimate and is decomposed gradually into the earth from which it was taken. This, then, is what is mortal. And it is concerning this that [Paul] says, "He shall also enliven your mortal bodies." Against Heresies 5.7.1.

A Glimpse of Glorified Resurrected Bodies.

Jerome: The substance of our resurrection bodies will certainly be the same as now, though of higher glory. For the Savior after his descent into hell had the same body in which he was crucified. He showed the disciples the marks of the nails in his hands and the wound in his side. Against Jovinianus 1.36.

Jesus' Prophecy of Joy Comes True.

Chrysostom: Do you see the words issuing in deeds? For what he said before the crucifixion, that "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you," this he now accomplished in deed. But all these things led them to a most exact faith. For since they had an endless war with the Jews, he continually repeated "Peace be to you," giving them consolation to counterbalance the strife. And so this was the first word that he spoke to them after the resurrection. (Similarly Paul keeps on saying, "Grace be to you and peace."). To the women, however, he gives good news of joy, because they were in sorrow and had received this as the first curse. Therefore he gives good news to each in their own situation: to the men he gave peace because of their war; to the women he gave joy because of their sorrow. Then having put away all painful things, he tells of the victory of the cross, and this was the "peace." Homilies on the Gospel of John 86.2–3.

20:21 Peace Again, and the Disciples' Commissioning

Peace Reiterated to Comfort Troubled Minds.

Peter Chrysologus: What does this repetition in bestowing peace mean, except that he wants the tranquility that he had announced to their minds individually also to be kept collectively among them by granting peace repeatedly? He knew, at any rate, that they were going to have far from insignificant struggles in the future stemming from his delay, with one boasting that he had persevered in faith and another in grief because he had doubted. ... Peter denies, John flees, Thomas doubts, all forsake him: unless Christ had granted forgiveness for these transgressions by his peace, even Peter, who was the first

in rank of all of them, would have been considered inferior and undeserving of his subsequent elevation to the primacy. Sermon 84.5.

He Sends Them in Love.

Peter Chrysologus: The mention of his having been sent does not diminish him as Son but declares that what he wants to be understood here is not the power of the one who sends but the charity of the one who has been sent. This is why he says, “Just as the Father,” not the Lord, “has sent me, so I send you.” In other words, I send you no longer with the authority of a Master but with all the affection of someone who loves you. I send you to endure hunger, to suffer the burden of chains, to the squalor of prison, to bear all kinds of punishments and to undergo bitter death for all: all of which charity, and not power, enjoins on human minds. Sermon 84.6.

The Apostolic Mission.

Cyril of Alexandria: Christ says that he sent the apostles even as the Father had sent him, that they might fully comprehend their mission: to call sinners to repentance and to minister to those who were caught up in evil, whether of body or soul. In all their dealings on this earth, they were not in any way to follow their own will but the will of him who sent them. They were also called to save the world by their teaching, so far as was possible. And in truth we shall find that holy disciples were eager to show the utmost enthusiasm in performing all these things. It is not difficult for people to see this, if they give their attention to the Acts of the Apostles and the words of the holy Paul. Commentary on the Gospel of John 12.1.

20:22 The Breath of the Spirit Given and Received

The Gradual Manifestation of the Spirit.

Gregory of Nazianzus: [Christ’s disciples] were able to receive [the Spirit] on three occasions: before he was glorified by the passion, after he was glorified by the resurrection and after his ascension.... Now the first of these manifests him—the healing of the sick and casting out of evil spirits and so does that breathing on them after the resurrection, which was clearly a divine inspiration. And so too the present distribution of the fiery tongues. But the first manifested him indistinctly, the second more expressly, this

present one more perfectly, since he is no longer present only in energy but ... substantially, associating with us and dwelling in us. On Pentecost, Oration 41.11.

Twofold Giving of the Spirit.

Augustine: But the reason why, after his resurrection, he both gave the Holy Spirit, first on earth, and afterward sent him from heaven, is in my judgment this: that “love is shed abroad in our hearts,” by that gift itself, whereby we love God and our neighbors, according to those two commandments, “on which hang all the law and the prophets.” And Jesus Christ signified this by giving them the Holy Spirit once on earth because of the love of our neighbor and a second time from heaven because of the love of God. And if some other reason may perhaps be given for this double gift of the Holy Spirit, at any rate we ought not to doubt that the same Holy Spirit was given when Jesus breathed on them, of whom he says, “Go, baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” where this Trinity is especially commended to us. It is therefore he who was also given from heaven on the day of Pentecost, that is, ten days after the Lord ascended into heaven. On the Trinity 15.26.46.

Receiving the Spirit Distinguished from Being Clothed in It.

Cyril of Jerusalem: This was the second time he breathed on human beings—his first breath having been stifled through willful sins. ... But though he bestowed his grace then, he was to lavish it yet more bountifully. And he says to them, I am ready to give it even now, but the vessel cannot yet hold it. For awhile therefore receive as much grace as you can bear. And look forward for yet more. “But stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.” Receive it in part now. Then, you shall wear it in its fullness. For the one who receives often possesses only a part of the gift. But the one who is clothed is completely enfolded by his robe. Catechetical Lectures 17.12.

The Holy Spirit Is the Breath of God.

Cyril of Alexandria: The Son, sharing the same nature as God the Father, has the Spirit in the same manner that the Father would be understood to have the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit is not something added or which comes from without, for it would be naïve—even insane—to hold such an opinion. But God the Father has the Spirit, just as each one of us has our own breath within us that pours forth from the innermost parts of the body. This is why Christ physically breathed on his disciples, showing that as the

breath proceeds physically from the human mouth, so too does Christ, in a manner befitting God, pour forth the [Spirit] from the divine essence. Commentary on the Gospel of John 9:1.

The Spirit Is the Son's to Give.

Athanasius: [He gave the Spirit] to the disciples, demonstrating his Godhead and his majesty and intimating that he was not inferior but equal to the Spirit. And so, he gave the Spirit, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and "I send him," and "he shall glorify me," and "Whatever he hears is what he shall speak."

... Through whom then and from whom is it that the Spirit should be given but through the Son, to whom also the Spirit belongs? And when were we enabled to receive it, except when the Word became man? Discourses against the Arians 1.12.50.

Prepared to Receive the Spirit.

Chrysostom: How is it that he says elsewhere, "If I do not go away, he will not come," and yet he gives them the Spirit here? Some say that by breathing he did not give them the Spirit but prepared them to receive the Spirit by breathing on them. For if Daniel's senses were so overpowered by the sight of the angel, how would they have been overwhelmed in receiving that unutterable gift, if he had not first prepared them for it!... It would not be wrong, however, to say that they received then the gift of a certain spiritual power, not to raise the dead and do miracles but to remit sins. For the gifts of the Spirit are of different kinds. Homilies on the Gospel of John 86.3.

The Beginning Proceeds from Unity.

Cyprian: To all the apostles, after his resurrection, he gives an equal power and says, "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you: Receive the Holy Spirit. Whoever's sins you remit, they shall be remitted to him. And whoever's sins you retain, they shall be retained." And yet, that he might promote unity, he arranged by his authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one ... so that the beginning proceeds from unity. And this one church, also, the Holy Spirit in the Song of Songs designated in the person of our Lord, saying, "My dove, my spotless one, is but one. She is the only one of her mother, elect of her that bore her." The Unity of the Church 4.

20:23 The Breath of the Spirit and Forgiveness

The Church Forgives and Retains Sin.

Ambrose: They affirm that they are showing great reverence for God, to whom alone they reserve the power of forgiving sins. But in truth no one does him greater injury than those who choose to prune his commandments and reject the office entrusted to them. For the Lord Jesus himself said in the Gospel, "Receive the Holy Spirit; whoever's sins you forgive they are forgiven to them, and whoever's sins you retain, they are retained." Who is it that honors him most, the one who obeys his bidding or the one who rejects it?

The church holds fast its obedience on either side by both retaining and remitting sin. Heresy is on the one side cruel and on the other disobedient. It wishes to bind what it will not loosen and will not loosen what it has bound, whereby it condemns itself by its own sentence. For the Lord willed that the power of binding and of loosing should be the same, and he sanctioned each by a similar condition. So whoever does not have the power to loose does not have the power to bind. For as, according to the Lord's word, the one who has the power to bind also has the power to loose, their teaching destroys itself, inasmuch as those who deny that they have the power of loosing ought also to deny that of binding. For how can the one be allowed and the other disallowed? It is plain and evident that either each is allowed or each is disallowed in the case of those to whom each has been given. Each is allowed to the church; neither is allowed to heresy. For this power has been entrusted to priests alone. It is only right, therefore, that the church, which has true priests, claims it. Heresy, which does not have the priests of God, cannot claim it. And by not claiming this power heresy pronounces its own sentence, that not possessing priests it cannot claim priestly power. Concerning Repentance 1.2.6–7.

The Church Founded on All of the Apostles.

Jerome: But you say the church was founded on Peter, although elsewhere the same is attributed to all the apostles, and they all receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the strength of the church depends on them all alike, yet one among the twelve is chosen so that when a head has been appointed, there may be no occasion for schism. Against Jovinianus 1.26.

The Master Confirms the Sentence of the Servants.

Chrysostom: Anyone who considers how much it means to be able, in his humanity still entangled in flesh and blood, to approach that blessed and immaculate Being will see clearly how great the honor is that the grace of the Spirit has bestowed on priests. It is through them that this work is performed, and other work no less than this in its bearing on our dignity and our salvation.

For earth's inhabitants, having their life in this world, have been entrusted with the stewardship of heavenly things, and they have received an authority that God has not given to angels or archangels. Not to them was it said, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose, shall be loosed." Those who are lords on earth have indeed the power to bind, but only people's bodies. But this binding touches the very soul and reaches through heaven. What priests do on earth, God ratifies above. The Master confirms the decisions of his servants. Indeed, he has given them nothing less than the whole authority of heaven. For he says, "Whoever's sins you forgive are forgiven, and whoever's sins you retain, they are retained." What authority could be greater than that? "The Father has given all judgment to the Son." But I see that the Son has placed it all in their hands. For they have been raised to this prerogative, as though they were already translated to heaven and had transcended human nature and were freed from our passions.

Again, if a king confers on one of his subjects the right to imprison and release again at will, that person is the envy and admiration of all. But although the priest has received from God an authority as much greater than that, as heaven is more precious than earth and souls than bodies, some people think he has received so slight an honor that they can imagine someone entrusted with it actually despising the gift. God save us from such madness! For it is patently mad to despise this great office without which we cannot attain to salvation or God's good promises. For if one "cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven unless he is born again of water and the Spirit," and anyone who does not eat the flesh of the Lord and drink his blood is excluded from eternal life, and all these things can happen through no other agency except their sacred hands (the priests', I mean), how can anyone, without their help, escape the fire of Gehenna or win his appointed crown? On the Priesthood 3.5.

When to Forgive, When to Retain.

Origen: Consider the person inspired by Jesus as the apostles were and who can be known by his fruits as someone who has received the Holy Spirit and become spiritual by being led by the Spirit as a son of God

to do everything by reason. This person forgives whatever God forgives and retains sins that cannot be healed, serving God like the prophets by speaking not his own words but those of the divine will. So he, too, serves God, who alone has authority to forgive. On Prayer 28.8.

Transforming Power of Ordination.

Cyril of Alexandria: After dignifying the holy apostles with the glorious distinction of the apostleship and appointing them ministers and priests of the divine altar, as I have just said, he at once sanctifies them by promising his Spirit to them through the outward sign of his breath, that we might be firmly convinced that the Holy Spirit is not alien to the Son but consubstantial with him and through him proceeding from the Father. He shows that the gift of the Spirit necessarily attends those who are ordained by him to be apostles of God. And why? Because they could have done nothing pleasing to God and could not have triumphed over the snares of sin if they had not been “clothed with power from on high” and been transformed into something other than they were before.... [Jesus] consecrates by actual sanctification, making people partakers in his nature, through participation in the Spirit and in some sort strengthening the nature of humanity into a power and glory that is superhuman. Commentary on the Gospel of John 12:1.

Importance of Priestly Vigilance.

Chrysostom: You should hold your pastor in high honor. You care about your own affairs, and if you care for them well you won't have to give an account to anyone else. But your pastor, even if he orders his own life well, if he does not have an anxious concern for your life as well, yes and of all those around him, he is sent to hell with the evildoers.... Therefore, knowing the greatness of their danger, give them a large measure of your goodwill.... They should receive your most favorable attention. But if you join with the rest in trampling on them ... and throw them into despondency, you weaken their hands and render them, as well as yourselves, an easy prey to the waves, no matter how courageous they are.... You have respect for secular authorities, but when God appoints do we despise him who is appointed and abuse him and besmirch him with ten thousand reproaches, and though forbidden to judge our brothers, do we sharpen our tongue against our pastors?... I am not saying that I approve of those who exercise their pastorate unworthily, but I do greatly pity them and weep for them.... And even if there is much to say against the way they have lived their lives, this in no way invalidates what they do by commission from God.... But why am I speaking only of pastors? Not even an angel or archangel can do anything on its own. The Father,

Son and Holy Spirit do it all while the pastor only furnishes the tongue and the hand. For it would not be right that the salvation of those who come to the sacraments in faith should be endangered by another's wickedness. Homilies on the Gospel of John 86.4.

20:24 Thomas, Called Didymus, Is Absent

A Twin in Word.

Origen: "Thomas" is called Didymus, which means "Twin," because he was a kind of twin in word, writing the divine things in two ways and copying Christ, who spoke to those outside of his circle in parables, but to his own disciples he spoke privately about everything. And it is not improper to say that Christ's genuine disciples achieve this double equipment in word that Thomas perhaps had already but even more so afterward. But it may be said that the interpretation of this alone has been recorded because the Evangelist was concerned that Greeks coming into contact with the gospel should notice the peculiarity of the interpretation of the only name specially interpreted, so as to find the cause of his name being set forth also in Greek. Fragment 106 on the Gospel of John.

Did Absent Thomas Receive the Spirit?

Cyril of Alexandria: How, then, someone may not unreasonably inquire, if Thomas was absent, was he in fact made partaker in the Holy Spirit when the Savior appeared to the disciples and breathed on them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit"? We reply that the power of the Spirit pervaded every person who received grace and fulfilled the aim of the Lord who gave him to them. And Christ gave the Spirit not to some only but to all the disciples. Therefore, if any were absent, they also received him, the munificence of the giver not being confined to those only who were present but extending to the entire company of the holy apostles. And that this interpretation is not strained, or our idea extravagant, we may convince you from holy Scripture itself, bringing forward as a proof a passage in the books of Moses. The Lord God commanded the all-wise Moses to select seventy elders from the assembly of the Jews and plainly declared, "I will take of the Spirit that is on you and will put it on them." Moses, as he was asked, brought them together and fulfilled the divine decree. Only it happened that two of the men who were included in the number of the seventy elders were left behind and remained in the assembly, that is, Eldad and Medad. Then when God put on them all the divine Spirit, as he had promised, those whom Moses had collected together immediately received grace and prophesied. But none the less also the two who were

in the assembly prophesied, and, in fact, the grace from above came on them first. Commentary on the Gospel of John 12:1.

20:25 Thomas Has to See and Feel for Himself

Reopening Old Wounds.

Peter Chrysologus: Why does the hand of a faithful disciple in this fashion retrace those wounds that an unholy hand inflicted? Why does the hand of a dutiful follower strive to reopen the side that the lance of an unholy soldier pierced? Why does the harsh curiosity of a servant repeat the tortures imposed by the rage of persecutors? Why is a disciple so inquisitive about proving from his torments that he is the Lord, for his pains that he is God, and from his wounds that he is the heavenly Physician?...

Why Thomas, do you alone, a little too clever a sleuth for your own good, insist that only the wounds be brought forward in testimony to faith? What if these wounds had been made to disappear with the other things? What a peril to your faith would that curiosity have produced? Do you think that no signs of his devotion and no evidence of the Lord's resurrection could be found unless you probed with your hands his inner organs that had been laid bare with such cruelty? Brothers, his devotion sought these things, his dedication demanded them so that in the future not even godlessness itself would doubt that the Lord had risen. But Thomas was curing not only the uncertainty of his own heart but also that of all human beings. And since he was going to preach this message to the Gentiles, this conscientious investigator was examining carefully how he might provide a foundation for the faith needed for such a mystery. ... For the only reason the Lord had kept his wounds was to provide evidence of his resurrection. Sermon 84.8.

Thomas Is a Precise Person.

Origen: Thomas seems to have had some precision and carefulness about him, which is shown also by what he said. He most likely did not believe those who said they had seen the Lord. It could have been an apparition, like what had happened in Matthew. I think this was the feeling of the other apostles too, but especially of Thomas. That the other apostles had some such thought on seeing Jesus is clear from there being written, "They supposed it was an apparition, and he answered and said to them, "Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have bones and flesh as you see me having." Fragment 106 on the Gospel of John.

Thomas Believes the Death but Not the Resurrection of Jesus.

Ammonius: Thomas was charged with being a real curiosity seeker because he thought the resurrection was impossible. Thus, he not only said “unless I see” but also “unless I touch,” lest somehow what he saw turned out to be an illusion. Therefore, when Thomas had heard from the disciples that Christ had been injured by a spear, Thomas believed them, even though he had not seen it. However, he did not believe their report of the resurrection, as if it were beyond reason. He did not say this so much out of unbelief but out of grief, because he himself had not been deemed worthy of seeing the risen Christ. It fit God’s purpose that Thomas did not believe, so that we all might know through him that the body that had been crucified had been raised. Since Thomas wanted to see the wounds all around Christ’s flesh, as well as his flesh itself, to see if he had risen, Thomas was searching for him. Fragments on John 633.

Jesus Is the Only Crucified King.

Justin Martyr: David refers to Jesus’ suffering and to the cross in a parable of mystery in Psalm 22[:16–18], “They pierced my hands and my feet.” ... But you still maintain that this very psalm does not refer to Christ because, in your blindness, you fail to realize that no one in [the Jewish] nation who has been called king or Christ has ever had his hands or feet pierced while alive or has died in this mysterious fashion—that is, by the cross—except this Jesus alone. Dialogue with Trypho 97.

The Physical Resurrection.

Cyril of Alexandria: We are taught by the slight lack of faith shown by the blessed Thomas that the mystery of the resurrection is effected on our earthly bodies and in Christ as the firstfruits of the human race. He was no phantom or ghost, fashioned in human shape, simulating the features of humanity, nor yet, as others have foolishly surmised, a spiritual body that is compounded of a subtle and ethereal substance different from the flesh. For some attach this meaning to the expression “spiritual body.” Since all our expectation and the significance of our irrefutable faith, after the confession of the holy and consubstantial Trinity, centers in the mystery concerning the flesh, the blessed Evangelist has very pertinently put this saying of Thomas side by side with the summary of what preceded. For observe that Thomas does not simply desire to see the Lord but looks for the marks of the nails, that is, the wounds on his body. For he affirmed that then, indeed, he would believe and agree with the rest that Christ had indeed risen again, and risen in the flesh. Commentary on the Gospel of John 12:1.

20:26 Jesus' Appearance to Thomas on the Eighth Day

The Eucharistic Assembly.

Cyril of Alexandria: With good reason, then, are we accustomed to have sacred meetings in churches on the eighth day. And, to adopt the language of allegory, as the idea necessarily demands, we indeed close the doors, but Christ still visits us and appears to us all, both invisibly as God and visibly in the body. He allows us to touch his holy flesh and gives it to us. For through the grace of God we are admitted to partake of the blessed Eucharist, receiving Christ into our hands, to the intent that we may firmly believe that he did in truth raise up the temple of his body.... Participation in the divine mysteries, in addition to filling us with divine blessedness, is a true confession and memorial of Christ's dying and rising again for us and for our sake. Let us, therefore, after touching Christ's body, avoid all unbelief in him as utter ruin and rather be found well grounded in the full assurance of faith. Commentary on the Gospel of John 12:1.

Why the Delay?

Chrysostom: And why does he not appear to him immediately, instead of "after eight days"? He does so in order that, in the meantime, being continually instructed by the disciples and hearing the same thing repeated, he might be inflamed with more eager desire and be more ready to believe for the future. But where did he learn that his side had been pierced? He heard it from the disciples. How then did he believe that but not believe the other story? Because the latter was very strange and wonderful. But observe the truthfulness of the disciples and how they hide no faults, either their own or others', but record them with great veracity. Jesus again presents himself to them and does not wait to be asked by Thomas or to hear any such thing. Rather, before Thomas could even speak, Jesus prevented him and fulfilled his desire, showing that even when Thomas spoke those words to the disciples, he was present. For he used the same words, though in a reproachful manner, and added instruction for the future. Homilies on the Gospel of John 87.1.

Admit the Limits of Your Senses to Understand.

Hilary of Poitiers: The Lord stoops to the level even of our feeble understanding. He works a miracle of his invisible power in order to satisfy the doubts of unbelieving minds. Explain, my critic, the ways of heaven—explain his action if you can. The disciples were in a closed room. They had met and held their assembly in secret since the passion of the Lord. The Lord presents himself to strengthen the faith of Thomas by

meeting his challenge. He gives him his body to feel, his wounds to handle. He, indeed, who would be recognized as having suffered wounds must necessarily produce the body in which those wounds were received. I ask at what point in the walls of that closed house the Lord bodily entered. The apostle has recorded the circumstances with careful precision: "Jesus came when the doors were shut and stood in the midst." Did he penetrate through bricks and mortar or through stout woodwork—substances whose very nature it is to bar progress? For there he stood in bodily presence; there was no suspicion of deceit. Let the eye of your mind follow his path as he enters. Let your intellectual vision accompany him as he passes into that closed dwelling. There is no breach in the walls; no door has been unbarred. Yet, see how he stands in the midst whose might no barrier can resist. You are a critic of things invisible; I ask you to explain a visible event. Everything remains firm as it was. No body is capable of insinuating itself through the interstices of wood and stone. The body of the Lord does not disperse itself, to come together again after a disappearance. Yet where does the one who is standing in their midst come from? Your senses and your words are powerless to account for it. The fact is certain, but it lies beyond the region of human explanation. If, as you say, our account of the divine birth is a lie, then prove that this account of the Lord's entrance is a fiction. If we assume that an event did not happen, because we cannot discover how it was done, we make the limits of our understanding into the limits of reality. But the certainty of the evidence proves the falsehood of our contradiction. The Lord did stand in a closed house in the midst of the disciples; the Son was born of the Father. Deny not that he stood, because your puny wits cannot ascertain how he came there; renounce instead a disbelief in God the only-begotten and perfect Son of God the unbegotten and perfect Father that is based only on the incapacity of sense and speech to comprehend. On the Trinity 3.20.

20:27 Put Your Finger Here, and See My Hands

The Signs of the Resurrection.

Chrysostom: It is worth inquiring how an incorruptible body showed the prints of the nails and was tangible to a mortal hand. But do not be disturbed. What took place was a matter of condescension. For that which was so subtle and light as to enter in when the doors were shut was entirely lacking all density. But this marvel was shown so that the resurrection might be believed and so that people might know that it was the crucified one himself and not another who rose instead of him. This is why he arose bearing the signs of the cross, and it is also why he eats. At least the apostles repeatedly made this a proof of the resurrection, saying "we, who did eat and drink with him." As, therefore, when we see him walking on the

waves before the crucifixion, we do not say that his body is of a different nature but the same as our own. So after the resurrection, when we see him with the prints of the nails, we do not say that he is therefore still mortal. It was for the sake of the disciple that he appeared in this way. Homilies on the Gospel of John 87.1.

The Same Flesh, but More Glorious.

Jerome: After the resurrection we shall have the same members that we now use, the same flesh and blood and bones, for it is not the nature of these that is condemned in Holy Scripture but their works... The true confession of the resurrection declares that the flesh will be glorious, but without destroying its reality. And so, when the apostle says, "This [flesh] is corruptible and mortal," his words denote this very body, in other words, the flesh that was then seen. But when he further adds that it "puts on incorruption and immortality," he is not saying that what was put on [i.e., the clothing] does away with the body that it adorns in glory. Rather, it makes that body glorious that previously lacked glory. When the more worthless robe of mortality and weakness is laid aside, then we can be clothed with the gold of immortality and the blessedness of strength as well as virtue. Against John of Jerusalem 28–29.

Will Martyrs Retain Their Wounds?

Augustine: The love we bear for the blessed martyrs causes us—how, I do not know—to desire to see in the heavenly kingdom the marks that they received for the name of Christ. And possibly we shall see them. For this will not be a deformity but a mark of honor and will add luster to their appearance as well as a spiritual (if not a bodily) beauty.... For even though the blemishes of the body will not be found in any resurrected body, the evidences of virtue can hardly be called blemishes. City of God 22.19.

Who Protected Thomas's Hand

Romanus Melodus:

Who protected the hand of the disciple, then,

That was not melted when he approached

The fiery side of the Lord?

Who gave it daring and strength to probe

The flaming bone?

Certainly the side was examined.

For unless the side had supplied abundant power,

How could a right hand of clay have touched

The sufferings which had shaken

What is above and what is below?

It was grace itself that was given to Thomas

By Christ to touch his side and to cry out,

“You are our Lord and God.”

Truly the bramble bush which endured fire

Was burned but not consumed.

Because of the hand of Thomas

I believe the story of Moses.

For, though his hand was perishable and thorny,

It was not burned

When it touched the side that was like burning flame.

Then fire came upon the bramble bush,

But now, the thorny one raced to the fire;

And God himself looked on,

Guarding both. And so I believe.

And so I will praise the one who is both God and man, as I cry,

“You are our Lord and God.”

For truly the boundary line of faith

Was circumscribed for me

By the hand of Thomas.

For when he touched Christ

He became like the pen

Of a rapid-writing scribe

That writes for the faithful.

Faith gushes forth from it.

The robber drank and became sober again from it.

The disciples watered their hearts from it.

Thomas drained the knowledge that he sought from it,

For he drank first and then offered a draught

To many who have a little doubt. He persuades them to say,

“You are our Lord and God.”

Kontakion on Doubting Thomas 46.1–3.

No One Now Can Doubt the Resurrection's Power.

Gregory of Nyssa: Once he had accustomed people to seeing the miracle of resurrection in other bodies, he confirmed his word in his own humanity. You already received a glimpse of that word working in others—those who were about to die, the child who had just ceased to live, the young man at the edge of the grave, the putrefying corpse, all alike restored by one command to life.... Now look at him whose hands were pierced with nails, look at him whose side was transfixed with a spear. Pass your fingers through the print of the nails, thrust your hand into the spear wound. You could surely guess how far within your hand would reach by the breadth of the external scar since the wound that gives admission to the hand shows to what depth the iron entered. If he then has been raised, well may we utter the apostle's exclamation, "How do some say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Since, then, every prediction of the Lord is shown to be true by the testimony of events—in fact, we not only learned this from his words but also received the proof in his deeds from the very same people who returned to life by resurrection—what other occasion is left for those who do not believe? Let us rather bid farewell to those who pervert our simple faith by "philosophy and vain deceit." Let us instead hold on to our confession [of the resurrection] in its purity, a confession that we have learned through the gracious words of the prophet, "You shall take away their breath, and they shall fail and turn to dust. You shall then send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth." On the Making of Man 25.12–13.

An Imperative to Believe.

Gregory of Nazianzus: If, like a Thomas, you were left out when the disciples were assembled to whom Christ shows himself, when you do see him do not be faithless. And if you do not believe, then believe those who tell you. And if you cannot believe them either, then have confidence in the print of the nails. On Holy Easter, Oration 45.24.

20:28 My Lord and My God!

The Crucified Was God.

Athanasius: Let them therefore confess, even they who previously denied that the crucified was God, that they have erred. For the divine Scriptures bid them, and especially Thomas, who, after seeing upon him the print of the nails, cried out, "My Lord and my God." Letter 59.10, To Epictetus.

Like Father, Like Son.

Ambrose: You have read that the Father is both Lord and God: "O Lord my God, I will call on you, hear me." You find the Son to be both Lord and God, as you have read in the Gospel, that, when Thomas had touched the side of Christ, he said, "My Lord and my God." So just as the Father is God and the Son Lord, so too the Son is God and the Father Lord. The holy designation changes from one to the other. The divine nature does not change, but the dignity remains unchangeable. For they are not [as it were] contributions gathered from bounty but free-will gifts of natural love. For unity has its special property, and the special properties are bound together in unity. On the Holy Spirit 3.15.108.

Thomas Touches God.

John Cassian: Thomas, when he touched the flesh, believed that he had touched God, saying, "My Lord and my God." For they all confessed but one Christ, so as not to make him two. Do you therefore believe him? And do you believe in such a way that Jesus Christ the Lord of all, both Only Begotten and firstborn, is both creator of all things and preserver of humanity and that the same person is first the framer of the whole world and afterward redeemer of humankind? On the Incarnation of the Lord Against Nestorius 6.19.

Touching the Flesh, He Invokes the Word.

Augustine: But when Jesus showed Thomas the very places where he had his doubts, Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." He touched his flesh, he proclaimed his divinity. What did he touch? The body of Christ. Was the body of Christ the divinity of Christ? The divinity of Christ was the Word; the humanity of Christ was soul and flesh. Thomas could not touch the soul, but he could perceive it, because the body that had been dead was moving about alive. But that Word is subject neither to change nor to contact, it neither regresses nor progresses, neither fails nor flourishes, because in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That is what Thomas proclaimed. He touched the flesh, he invoked the Word, because "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Sermon 145A.

20:29 Seeing Is Not Believing

Christ's Patience with Thomas and Us.

Cyril of Alexandria: Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." These words were wonderfully pertinent, and they can be of very great help to us. They demonstrate once again how much he cares for our souls, for he is good, and as Scripture says, "He wants everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." Even so, this saying of his may surprise us. As always, Christ had to be patient with Thomas when he said he would not believe and with the other disciples too when they thought they were seeing a ghost. Because of his desire to convince the whole world, he most willingly showed them the marks of the nails and the wound in his side. Because he wanted those who needed such signs as a support for their faith to have no possible reason for doubt, he even took food, although he had no need for it.... But when anyone accepts what he has not seen, believing on the word of his teacher, the faith by which he honors the one his teacher proclaims to him is worthy of great praise. Blessed, therefore, is everyone who believes the message of the holy apostles who, as Luke says, were eyewitnesses of Christ's actions and ministers of the word. If we desire eternal life and long for a dwelling place in heaven, we must listen to them. Commentary on the Gospel of John 12:1.

Blessing Hidden in Suffering.

Ambrose: There are some ... who think a blessed life is impossible in this body, weak and fragile as it is. For we have to suffer pain and grief, weeping, illness—all in this body.... It is not a blessing to be in the midst of suffering. But it is a blessing to be victorious over it and not to be bullied by the power of temporal pain. Suppose that things come that are considered terrible because of the grief they cause, such as blindness, exile, hunger, violation of a daughter, loss of children. Who will deny that Isaac was blessed, who did not see in his old age, and yet gave blessings with his benediction? Was not Jacob blessed who, leaving his father's house, endured exile as a shepherd for pay, and mourned for the violated chastity of his daughter and suffered hunger? Were they not blessed on whose good faith God received witness, as it is written: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob"? A wretched thing is slavery, but Joseph was not wretched. In fact, clearly he was blessed when, while a slave, he checked the lusts of his mistress. What shall I say of holy David, who bewailed the death of three sons, and, what was even worse than this, his daughter's incestuous connection? How could he be unblessed from whom the author

of blessedness himself sprung who has made many blessed? For “blessed are they who have not seen yet have believed.” All these felt their own weakness, but they bravely prevailed over it. What can we think of as more wretched than holy Job, either in the burning of his house, or the instantaneous death of his ten sons or his bodily pains? Was he less blessed than if he had not endured those things whereby he really showed himself approved?

It is true that in these sufferings there is something bitter and that we cannot use mind over matter to hide this pain. I should not deny that the sea is deep because in shore it is shallow, or that the sky is clear because sometimes it is covered with clouds, or that the earth is fruitful because in some places there is only barren ground or that the crops are rich and full because they sometimes have wild oats mingled with them. So, too, count it as true that the harvest of a happy conscience may be mingled with some bitter feelings of grief. In the sheaves of the whole of a blessed life, if by chance any misfortune or bitterness has crept in, is it not as though the wild oats were hidden or as though the bitterness of the tares was concealed by the sweet scent of the corn? Duties of the Clergy 2.5.19–21.

Courageous Endurance.

John of Carpathus: Blessed are those who, when grace is withdrawn, find no consolation in themselves but only continuing tribulation and thick darkness, and yet they do not despair. Rather, strengthened by faith, they endure courageously, convinced that they do indeed see him who is invisible. Texts for the Monks in India 71.

20:30 Many Other Signs in the Disciples’ Presence

Many Signs Before and After the Resurrection.

Chrysostom: For as before the resurrection it was necessary that many signs should be done, in order that they might believe that he was the Son of God, so it was also necessary after the resurrection, in order that they might admit that he had arisen. Another reason why he added “In the presence of his disciples” is because he conversed with them alone after the resurrection. Therefore he also said, “The world sees me no more.” Homilies on the Gospel of John 87.2.

20:31 Believing in Christ the Son of God

John Foresaw Heresies.

Irenaeus: The Gospel knew no other Son of man but him who was of Mary, who also suffered. There was no Christ who flew away from Jesus before the passion. The Gospel knew about him who was born as Jesus Christ the Son of God and that this same person suffered and rose again, as John, the disciple of the Lord verifies, saying, "But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." [He foresaw] blasphemous systems that divide the Lord, as far as lies in their power, saying that he was formed of two different substances. Against Heresies 3.16.5.

What Is True Faith?

Hilary of Poitiers: The one reason that he alleges for writing his Gospel is that all may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If it is sufficient for salvation to believe that he is the Christ, why does he add "the Son of God"? But if the true faith is nothing less than the belief that Christ is not merely Christ but Christ the Son of God, then assuredly the name of Son is not attached to Christ as a customary appendage due to adoption, seeing that it is essential to salvation. If then, salvation consists in the confession of the name, must not the name express the truth? If the name expresses the truth, by what authority can he be called a creature? It is not the confession of a creature but the confession of the Son that shall give us salvation. To believe, therefore, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is true salvation, is the acceptable service of an unfeigned faith. For we have no love within us toward God the Father except through faith in the Son. On the Trinity 6.41–42.

Jesus Is Life.

Chrysostom: He speaks in general to humankind, showing that it is not the one who we believe in but on ourselves that he bestows a very great favor "in his name," that is, "through him." For he is the Life. Homilies on the Gospel of John 87.2.

An Ending and a Preface.

Augustine: This paragraph indicates, as it were, the end of the book. But afterward, there is still the account of how the Lord manifested himself at the sea of Tiberias and in the draught of fishes where special reference is made to the mystery of the church and its future character in the final resurrection of the dead. I think, therefore, it is arranged in this way in order to give special prominence to the fact that the end of the book has, as it were, been interposed, and that this ending was meant to be a kind of preface to the narrative that was to follow, in order in some measure to give it a position of greater eminence. Tractates on the Gospel of John 122.1.