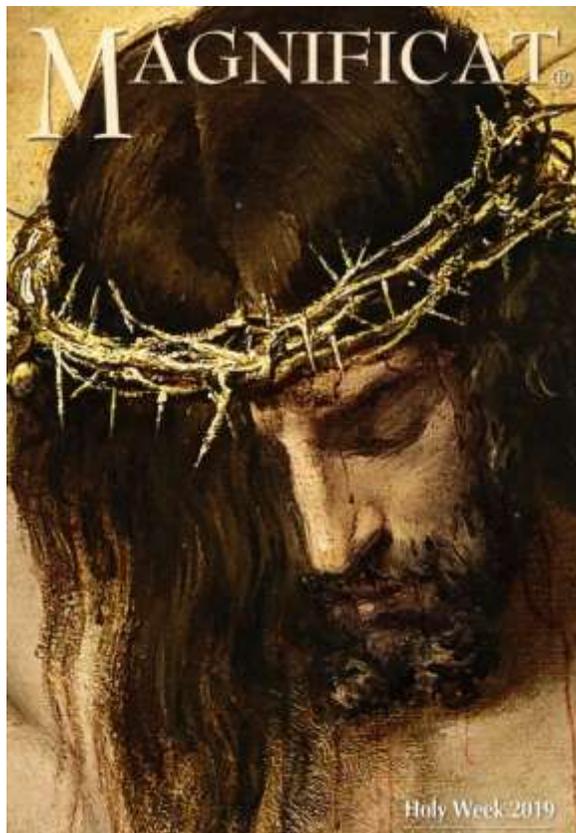


## Artists Almanac- Easter 2019 - *Extra Edition*

*Will the circle be unbroken?*

When my mother was still with us, we used to gather as a family after church each Sunday at a restaurant owned by a Greek family. The owner was from was from Corinth, Greece, and was Orthodox. He made pizzas all day, pizzas such as I have never since tasted. But on Good Friday each year, preparing food and surrounded by its savory aromas, he kept a black fast – nothing but water. *I thirst.*



According to the Bible, Jesus died on the cross on Friday during the Jewish Festival of Passover, which falls on April 19<sup>th</sup> this year, the day we call Good Friday. All his friends and disciples had deserted him except his mother Mary, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead, and John, the disciple whom he loved.

Passover is traditionally the time of His conception, announced by the Angel Gabriel to his mother 34 years earlier. That is why his birth was held to have been

nine months later, on December 25<sup>th</sup>, when we celebrate Christmas. The fact this occurs near the Winter Solstice, the day when light begins its return to our earth and which was once celebrated by some pagan tribes as a holiday is an interesting coincidence, but not the reason this date was chosen.

No serious secular historian today questions that Jesus lived, preached, and died in a Roman province in the city of Jerusalem, a city which Rome reconquered after a Jewish rebellion 40 years later and whose temple they burned to the ground. The characters, Pilate, Herod, and Caesar are all there in the history books, as is the Roman refinement of the torture of crucifixion for those it deemed enemies.

What is an issue for some is the historical accuracy of the crucifixion and of Jesus's Resurrection from the dead. This despite the fact that the earliest accounts of it were written less than twenty years after the event in the letters of Paul. How did Paul know all this? Much the same way you know about Ronald Reagan's presidency, or even John F. Kennedy's, because even 30 -60 years is not that long and many of us are still alive who remember those events. In writing of it to the Church in Corinth (home of my pizza chef), Paul states plainly that there were over 500 witnesses to the risen Christ and *that many of them are still alive*. The gospels were written a bit later than Paul's letter – in 60-70 AD. Three of them are the products of eyewitnesses of the events – Matthew, Mark, and John.

For much of my life the most convincing evidence of the Resurrection was the effect on the Apostles themselves. What but the greatest of all miracles could turn around by 180 degrees men who had witnessed Him crucified, denied knowing Him, and who feared for their own lives and who were fleeing as fast and as far as they could, hiding as best they could from His executioners. Peter returned to his rough life as a commercial fisherman in remote Galilee.

Yet after they themselves later saw Him, talked with Him, even ate and drank with Him, they became so convinced of the truth of what they themselves had experienced, that they scattered to all parts of the globe to tell others of this good news, the greatest of truths, heedless of danger, suffering torture and martyrdom like His, founding the largest of human organizations, the Church, which thrives today 2,000 years later, the oldest of human organizations on earth. This kind of success cannot be built upon hallucinations, lies, or delusions.

Why is a death 2,000 years ago such a big deal to us today. The Apostle Paul got it right when he wrote in a letter to the Christians in the ancient hometown of my pizza chef, Corinth; *If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people.* (I Corinthians 15:19). What else matters, if we get this wrong?

How can we solve a 2,000-year-old cold case murder? We can't cross examine his Disciples, his mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, the first to see him after he arose, nor the 500 people who were said to have seen him alive in the flesh after his death. We can't interview the writers of the Gospel accounts. We can't examine the whips that cut him up nor the spear that pierced him. There is no *smoking gun*. But Science may have given us one - the Shroud of Turin.

The Shroud made its first appearance in print in the fourth century and led a perilous existence, shunted from place to place, barely escaping the Muslims as they raged through the homelands of the early Christians, and was hidden from the crusader Christian themselves who ransacked Constantinople. Later when it arrived in Italy and France it was displayed outside, roughly handled, exposed to the elements and scorched by a fire. But the thousands who saw it didn't really understand what they were seeing, because they had never seen a negative image in the days before photography. Even today it is difficult to recognize people in photographic negatives. We know in our minds that negatives show where the light didn't hit, just as sunburn outlines bra straps on swim suits or watches on wrists. The Shroud, exposed to sunlight, moisture, and dirt became increasingly faded and the negative figures barely visible.

<sup>1</sup>The first technology to make a contribution to our understanding was photography. The story is told of the first photographer to make the first positive image of the shroud! He was so shocked at the first positive image he almost dropped the plate!

the sharply-defined, full-length images of a tortured, crucified human, clearly recognizable to most as the historical Jesus Christ, unexpectedly appeared on the large photographic negative plate, Pia's hands began to tremble. He was so shocked he nearly dropped it.<sup>17</sup>



(Fig. 13)

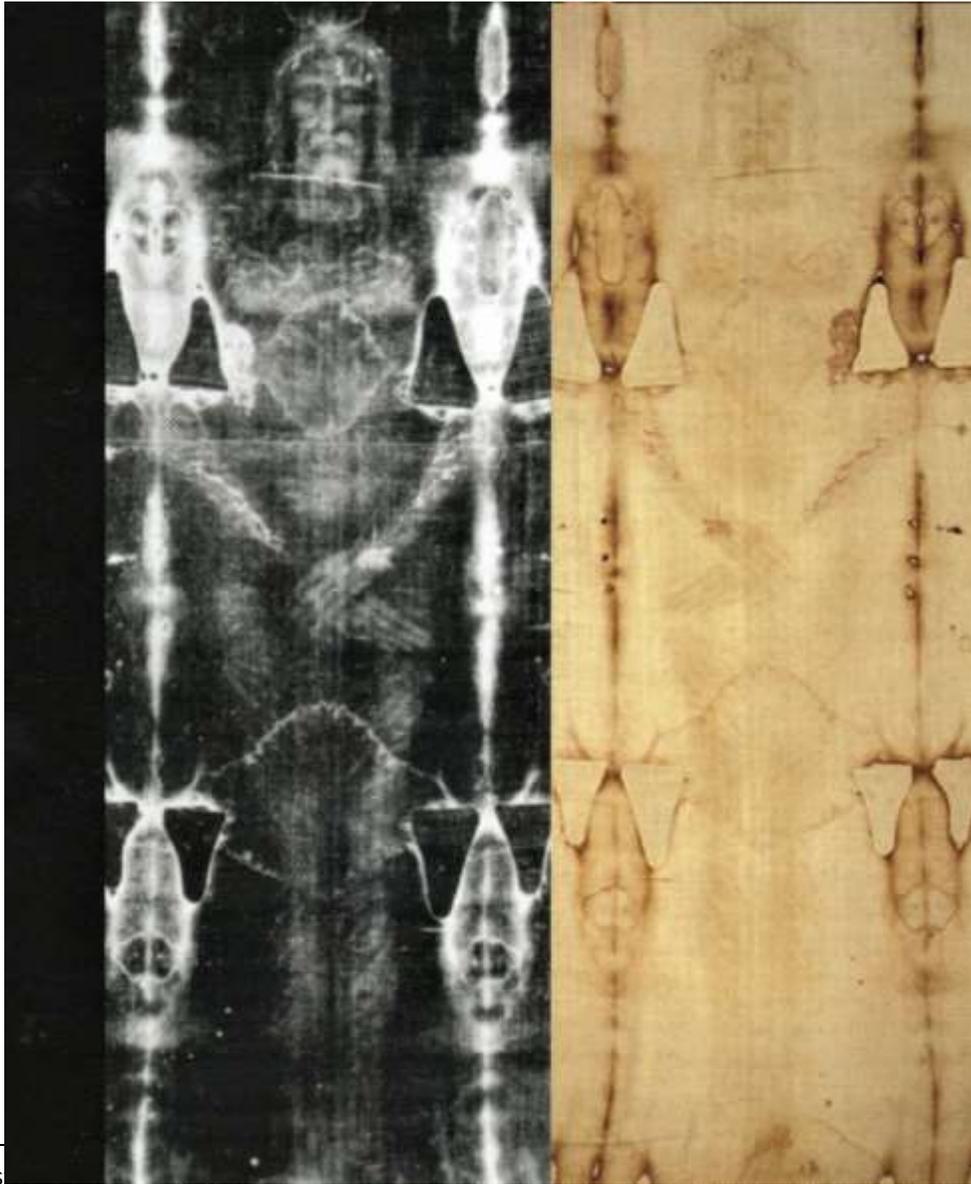


(Fig. 14)

The stark contrast in numerous distinct details and overall appearance can be seen above in the negative and positive facial images of the man in the Shroud.

<sup>1</sup> *Test the Shroud* – Mark Antonachi, Forefront Publishing Co. p14

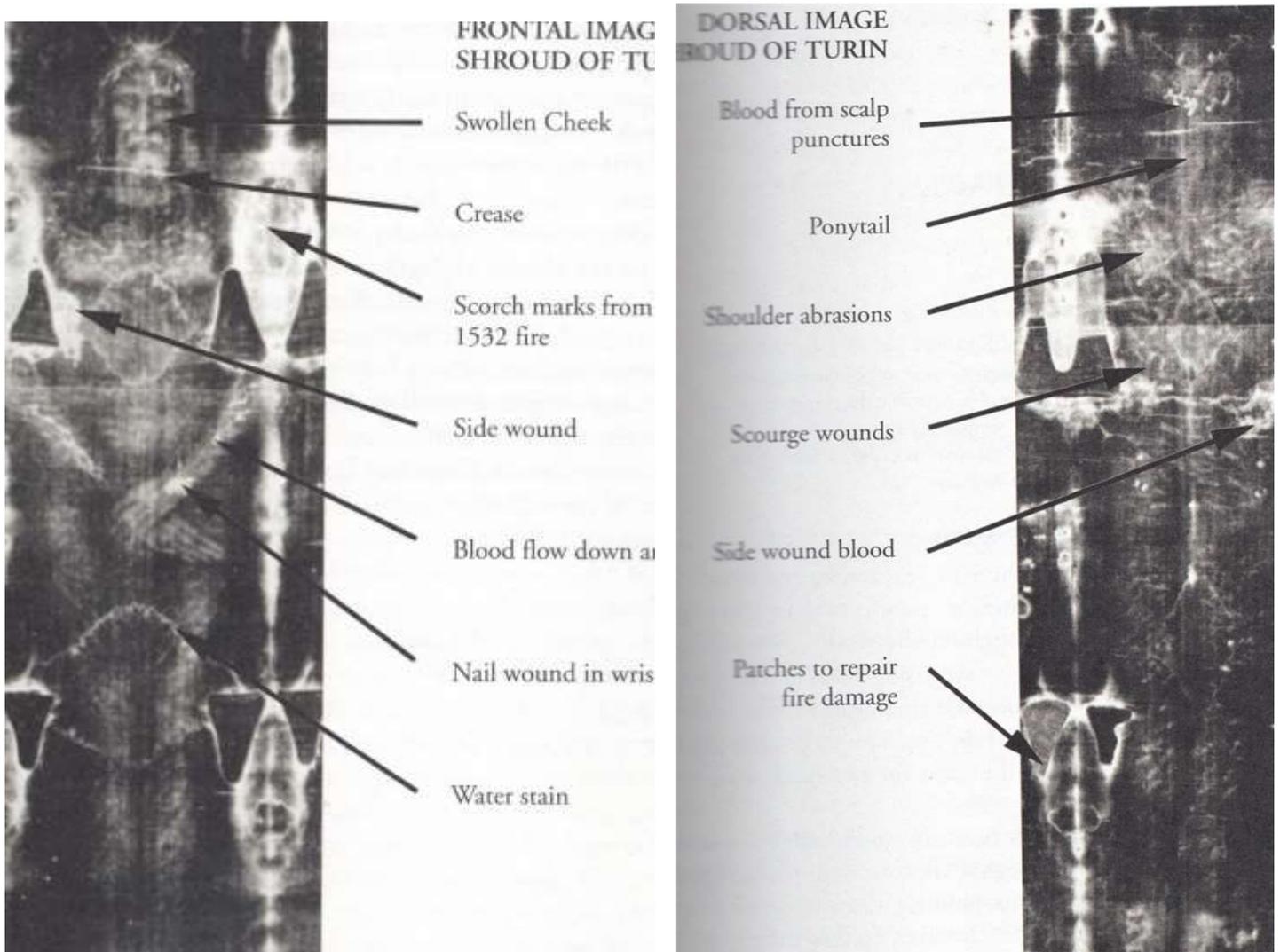
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<sup>2</sup> Ibis, front dus



(Fig. 83) *The source of the illumination could only have been the body wrapped*



Every mark on the above image is exactly as indicated in the Biblical accounts. The bilateral marks of the scourge are at the downward diagonal implying the downward strokes on a man chained to a post. The contused cheek, the spear wound, the nail holes through the wrists, the scalp wounds from the thorns, and even the patterns of the blood flows from the body are all there, imprinted by a mysterious burst of radiation from a light that darkness could not overcome. The cloth itself was made of fibers of plants peculiar to that area and era, woven by a particular pattern used then and bound with a manner of stitching unique to that time, as found in the Jewish fortress of Masada. Traces of seeds from plants of the region and time were found on the cloth. The burn marks are from a 1532 fire thought to have skewed subsequent carbon dating tests, which themselves were corrected by subsequent atomic testing of isotopes.



Detail from sarcophagus of Junius Bassus

The New Testament does not describe Christ's physical appearance. During the first five centuries A.D. images of Jesus usually portrayed him as young and clean-shaven, with short hair.



Portrait of Jesus, ca 500

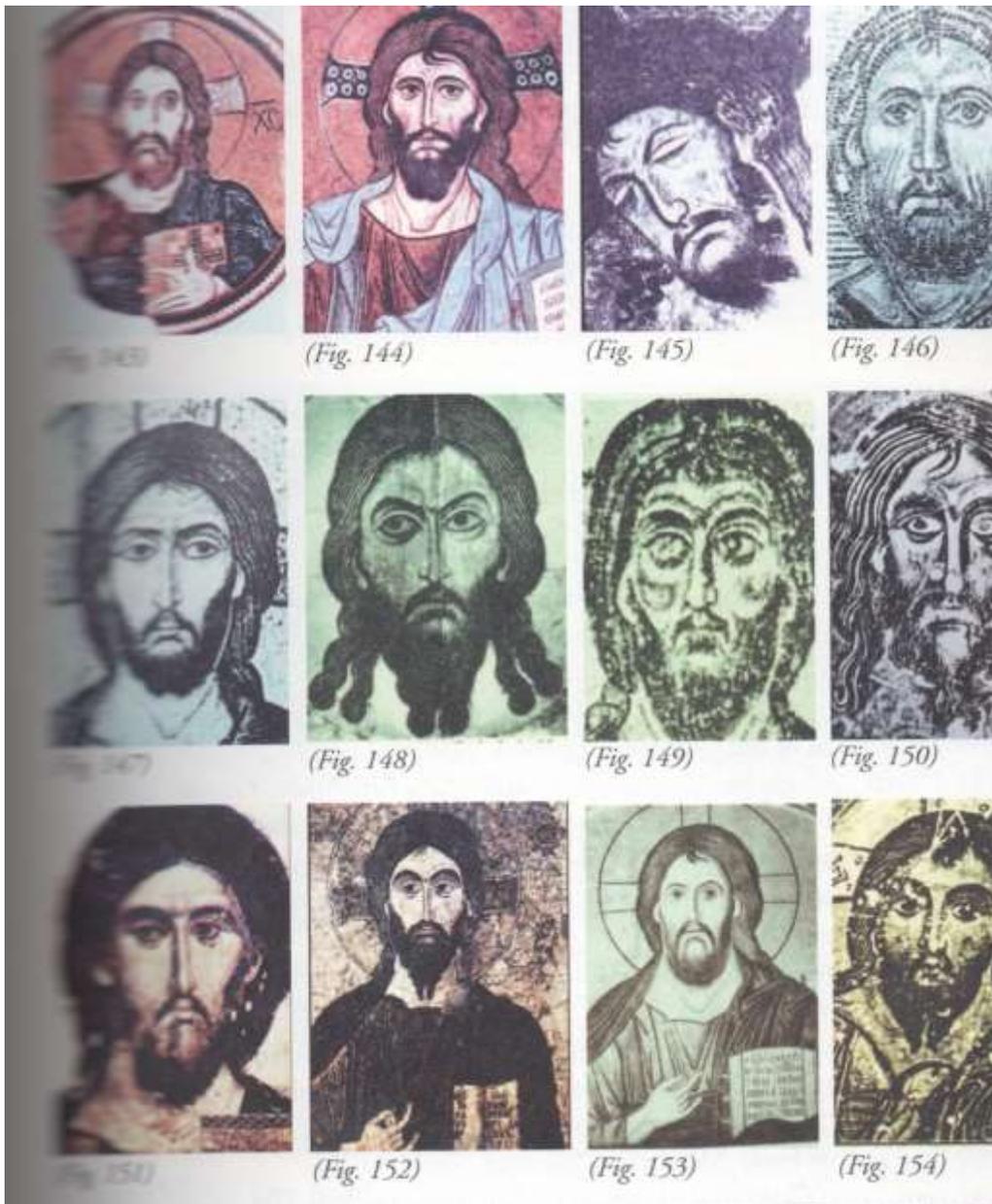
Christ Healing a Blind Man, St. Appollinare Nuova in Ravenna, ca. 520-5



Christ Enthroned. Apse mosaic, San Vitale, Ravenna. Ca. 545



<sup>3</sup>Then, suddenly, after five centuries of variation, Christ's likeness abruptly changes. His hair, previously depicted as short, becomes long and parted in the middle, falling to his shoulders. Previously clean-shaven, his new image has a forked beard and a thin mustache that droops to join the beard. His face is longer and more refined with a nose that is also longer and more pronounced. His eyes become more deeply set and his whole countenance after the first appearance of the Shroud in print the pictures of Christ became remarkably consistent. They are all consistent and congruent with the image on the Shroud.



<sup>3</sup> Ibid

I was first introduced to this phenomenon more than 50 years ago by the best Art teacher I ever knew – the late Gus Baker, Chairman of the Art Department of The University of Tennessee in Nashville. Gus was a mentor of many, not just in Art, but in music, literature, and poetry. As I was learning more about it, the Shroud, scientific, forensic, and historic research on it was increasing and discovering more and more clues that it was indeed the burial cloth of Jesus.

I was pleased to learn this past week that this additional research has been done and it not only upheld the authenticity of the Shroud and all it tells us, but it also disproved the conclusions announced in a 1988 carbon dating study conducted almost years earlier - tests which placed the Shroud in the medieval period. The earlier tests used certain inconsistent protocols and a suspect sample taken from a section of the cloth corrupted by fire. Using more modern equipment and better protocols the scientists in tests completed in 2013 dated the Shroud between 300 BC and 400 AD.

Now during Holy Week, we become once again painfully aware of the intensity of just what Christ suffered and what it means to us today.

The Roman Empire maintained peace by a rule of terror. While it had a good system of law, much of which is reflected in ours today, it had some laws which were not to be violated under penalty of the most agonizing death imaginable at that time – crucifixion. So horribly painful was it that it was only applied to those subjects who were not citizens. Roman citizens were beheaded – a swift and merciful death compared to hanging bleeding and naked before leering crowds on a cross for days along a roadside as crows picked their eyes out. Yet this event, beyond all horror, is celebrated today as our supreme victory. Why?

We all know the highlights of this drama. The week began with a stopover at the home of his close friends, Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus whom he had earlier raised from the dead. This was the miracle that finally broke the last straw and convinced his enemies they had to do away with him. Lazarus' home was in Bethany on the outskirts of Jerusalem. There Martha fixed dinner while Mary worshipped him, bathing his feet with her tears, drying them with her hair, symbolically breaking open a precious alabaster flask holding a precious oil, Nard, worth almost one year's wages, to lovingly rub and perfume his feet.



*Christ in the House of Mary and Martha - Vermeer*

The next day Jesus rode into Jerusalem from the east on a donkey. People who knew of the raising of Lazarus swarmed him, damping down the dust of the road with branches from the palms lining the way and even with their clothing. That day Pontius Pilate, the new Roman Governor, traveled up from the Caesarea on the coast to enter Jerusalem from the west, at the head of his glittering retinue of Imperial Guards. The two were to meet later that week after the Sanhedrin had arrested Him in the garden, tried, and convicted Him in a kangaroo court proceeding and sent him to Pilate to execute Him, which the Jews were not permitted by law to do. The day's final scene is too horrible to contemplate.



*It was the third hour,  
and they crucified him.*

DETAIL OF PAINTING  
BY JAN VAN EYCK

Yet Christ turned this most horrible shame and suffering of the cross into a victory over death for all mankind.

When Lazarus's sister Mary went to the tomb to anoint his body for the second time that week, she found the entry stone rolled back and the crypt empty. When she recognized him, he declined her embrace, for he had not yet ascended to his Father.

However, when he caught up with two of his disciples fleeing towards Galilee, he turned them around and had dinner with them, eating bread, drinking wine and allowing Thomas, to place his finger in his spear wound, to prove it was really he in the flesh.



*Noli me Tangere*, by Antonio da Correggio, c. 1525



*The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (1634) - Rembrandt van Rijn



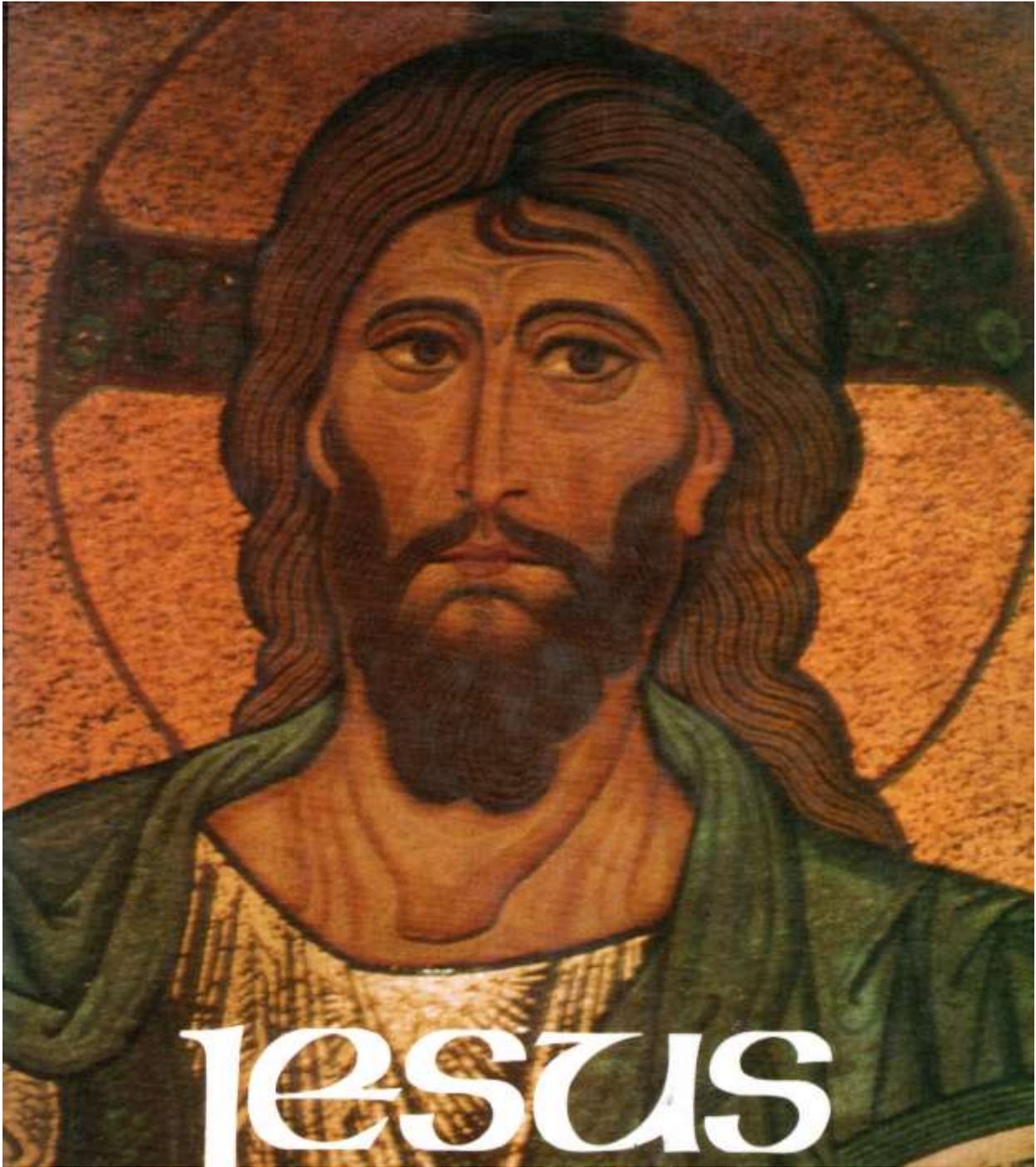
*Supper at Emmaus*, Caravaggio, depicting the moment the disciples recognize Jesus

<sup>4</sup>Christ made at least eight different appearances in the 40 days following His resurrection, most of them certified by two or more witnesses. Never before in history has such a vast amount of objective and independent evidence existed to corroborate the occurrence of critical ancient events of human history. Archeology and history have combined before to support the authenticity of historical items and to shed some light on past events. Nor has a comprehensive amount of unforgeable scientific evidence ever combined with the most attested and authentic sources of ancient history.

The incomparable evidence clearly and consistently supports the authenticity of the Shroud as Jesus' burial garment. It further indicates that all of the wounds and suffering, as well as the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of the historical Jesus Christ occurred, just as these events are recorded in the most accurate and reliable sources of antiquity. However, no summary as short as this can begin to cover all this evidence and these tests and studies and we strongly recommend that you look at the many sources, beginning with the story of the Shroud currently available on Netflix.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid



*Christ in Power, Mosaic, Cefallu, Sicily*

A Blessed Easter to You!