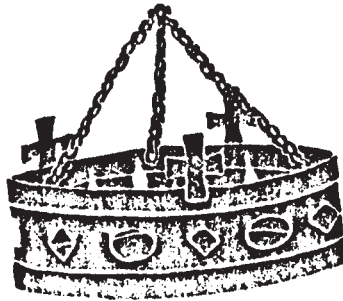


Libretto
FOR THE VIDEO

THE VISIT TO THE SEPULCHER

VISITATIO SEPULCHRI

AN EASTER PLAY
FROM THE TWELFTH CENTURY
ORLÉANS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE LA VILLE MS. 201



CROWN LIGHT EDITION
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA

VISIT TO THE SEPULCHER
(Visitatio Sepulchri)

A likeness of the Lord's Sepulcher having been constructed, first let three of the brothers, in the likeness of the three Marys, proceed toward the Sepulcher, feeling their way with their feet, as if sad.

Mary Magdalene: Alas! The beloved Shepherd has been slain. He who was without guilt. What a lamentable thing!

Mary Jacobi: Alas! Truly, the Shepherd is dead, He who gave life to the dead. O, deplorable death!

Mary Salome: Alas! Vile race! What terrible insanity this was! You disgusting people!

Mary Magdalene: Why did you condemn our beloved One with your senseless hate? O, abominable wrath!

Mary Jacobi: What kind of justice was this that crucified Him without cause? O, wretched people!

Mary Salome: What shall we do, deprived of our sweet Master? We bewail His sad fate.

Mary Magdalene: We must therefore hasten to do what only we can do, with mindful devotion.

Mary Jacobi: With fragrant spices let us anoint His most holy body. O how precious it is.

Mary Salome: These spices will prevent decay in the tomb, and sanctify His flesh.

When they have come into the choir area, let them go to the Sepulcher, as if searching, and singing together:

All Three Marys: But we cannot enter without help. Who will roll away the stone from the holy tomb's entrance?

To whom replies the Archangel, sitting outside the tomb at the head of the Sepulcher, vested in a gilded alb, a tight coif around his head but without a fillet over the coif, and holding a palm frond in his left hand, a flaming candelabra in his right, in a moderate and very solemn voice:

Archangel: Whom do you seek in the tomb, Christians?

All Three Marys: Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, O heavenly one.

Archangel: Why do you Christians seek the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen as He foretold to the disciples. Remember the words He spoke to you in Galilee, how Christ would suffer and on the third day rise again in glory.

Let the Women, turning toward the people, sing:

Mary Magdalene: To the tomb of the Lord we come, mourning.

Mary Jacobi: We see the angel of God sitting,

Mary Salome: And telling of how Christ is risen from the dead.

After this, let Mary Magdalene, having left the other two, approach the Sepulcher, and into which repeatedly looking, let her sing:

Mary Magdalene: Alas! Sorrow! Alas! How dire and grievous is our anguish! He who was so adored! I am deprived of the Master's presence. Alas! The body so beloved, who stole it from the tomb?

At this point let her go quickly to those who in the likeness of Peter and John must show themselves upright, and let her, standing before them sadly sing:

Mary Magdalene: They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have put Him. And we found the tomb empty. Only the kerchief and shroud are left inside.

Let them, hearing this, go quickly to the Sepulcher as if running, but let the younger, that is, John, arriving first, stand outside it; let the elder, that is Peter, following him, enter at once, and then John.

John: What marvels we see! Have they stolen away the Lord?

Peter: Nay, as He foretold, I believe the Lord has risen.

John: But why are the kerchief and shroud left in the tomb?

Peter: Because now that He has risen, there is no need for them.

Peter and John: In fact, because He has risen, they are here only as a sign.

As they leave, let Mary Magdalene go to the Sepulcher.

Mary Magdalene: Alas! Sorrow! Alas! How dire and grievous is our anguish! He who was so adored! I am deprived of the Master's presence. Alas! The body so beloved, who stole it from the tomb?

Let two Angels, seated inside the Sepulcher, speak to her:

First and Second Angels: Woman, why do you weep?

Mary Magdalene: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have put Him.

First and Second Angels: Do not weep, Mary. The Lord is risen!

Choir: Alleluia!

Mary Magdalene: My heart is ardent with desire to see my Lord. I seek, but I do not find where they have put Him.

Choir: Alleluia!

Meanwhile let one who has been prepared in the likeness of a gardener come toward her, and standing at the head of the Sepulcher, sing:

Christus (as gardener): Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek?

Mary Magdalene: Sir, if you have taken Him, tell me where you have put Him, and I will bring Him back.

Christus: Mary!

Mary Magdalene: Master!

Christus: Do not touch me! I am not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.

Thus let the gardener depart.

Mary Magdalene: Rejoice with me, all you who love the Lord, for the one I sought has appeared to me, and while I wept at the tomb, I saw Jesus, my Lord!

Choir: Alleluia!

Then let the two Angels come to the door of the Sepulcher, so that they can be seen outside.

First Angel: Come and see the place where the Lord was lain.

Choir: Alleluia!

Second Angel: Do not be afraid, Magdalene! Abandon your grief! Jesus lives! Go tell it! Go now to Galilee. If you wish to see Him, hurry!

First Angel: Go quickly! Tell the disciples that the Lord is risen!

Choir: Alleluia!

Then let the Women, leaving the Sepulcher, sing to the people:

Mary Jacobi: The Lord is risen from the sepulcher,

Mary Salome: Who for us hung on the cross.

Choir: Alleluia!

This done, let them open up the shroud, singing to the people:

Mary Jacobi and Mary Salome: See, friends, these are what belonged to His dear body: the empty shroud which was dropped, and left in the sepulcher.

Mary Magdalene: He has risen today, the God of gods!

Mary Jacobi: In vain you sealed the stone, you vile men.

Mary Salome: Join us now, all Christian people.

Mary Magdalene: He is risen today, the King of the angels!

Mary Jacobi: Led from darkness into light is the throng of the righteous.

All Three Marys: Opened are the gates to the kingdom of heaven!

Meanwhile let him who earlier was the gardener now enter in the likeness of the Christus, vested in a white dalmatic, his forehead bound with a white fillet, a costly amulet on the front of it, a cross with a banner in his right hand, and having a gold pall in his left.

Christus (in His Glory): Do not be afraid! Go, tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will meet me, just as I told them.

Choir: Alleluia!

Angels, Marys, Choir: Christ the Lord is risen today. The mighty lion, Christ, the Son of God!

The play is concluded by a processional singing of the Te Deum laudamus.

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