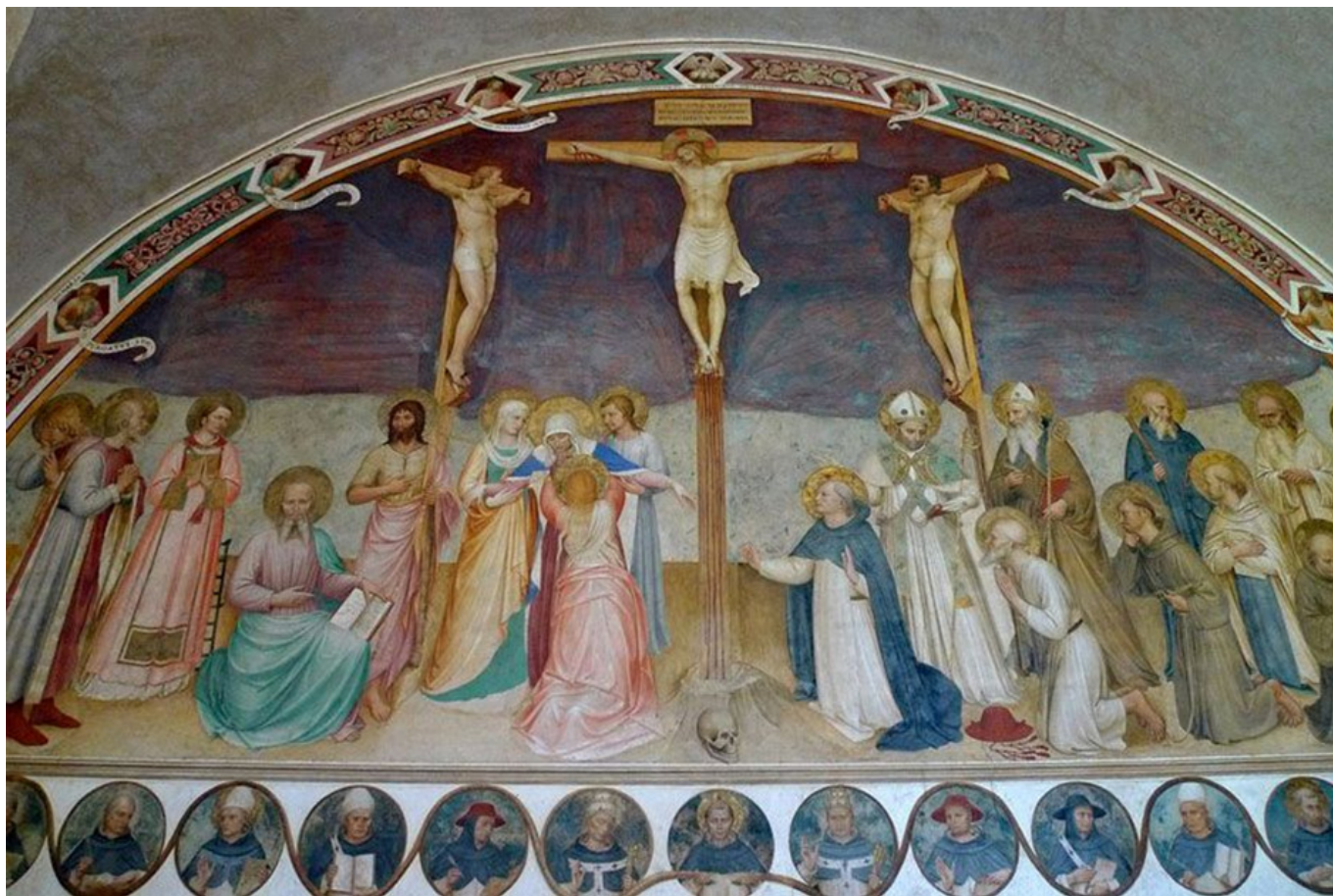




Crucifixion by Fra Angelico – Museo San Marco, Firenze

Place of the SKULL

By Father Ladis J. Cizik

The skull at the base of Our Lord and God Jesus Christ's Cross that often appears on traditional Crucifixes and in classical paintings deserves to be noticed and understood. The place where Jesus was Crucified in Jerusalem can be referred to as the 'Place of the Skull,' Calvary, or Golgotha. Yet, the venerable English translation of the Bible, the Douay-Rheims, does not mention the Place of the Skull, while it does mention Calvary and Golgotha:

*"Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him forth. And bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called **Calvary**, but in Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified Him ..."*

(Douay- Rheims, John 19:16-18) [\[1\]](#)

From the source of the Douay-Rheims Bible, the official Bible of the Catholic Church for over 1,600 years, the Latin Vulgate,[\[2\]](#) we read:

*“Tunc ergo tradidit eis illum ut crucifigeretur. Susceperunt autem Jesum, et eduxerunt. Et bajulans sibi crucem exivit in eum, qui dicitur **Calvariae** locum, hebraice autem Golgotha : ubi crucifixerunt eum ...”*

(Latin Vulgate, John 19:16-18) [\[3\]](#)

The word chosen in the Douay-Rheims Bible, “Calvary,” is derived from the Latin word “*calvariae*,” which means “skull.” Hence, we can have an alternative traditional Catholic English translation using “Skull” in place of “Calvary:”

*“Then he handed Him over to them to be crucified. And so they took Jesus and led Him away. And bearing the cross for Himself, He went forth to the place called **the Skull**, in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him ...”*

(Catholic Confraternity Bible, John 19:16-18) [\[4\]](#)



Entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was constructed over Mount Calvary, the Place of the Skull, where Our Lord Jesus Christ was Crucified, died, and was buried. The Tomb, or Sepulchre, of Christ is located within this venerable church at the foot of Mount Calvary. Hence, when pilgrims visit this church, they have to ascend a stairway to the place where Jesus was Crucified. Then, returning to ground level, they are able to venerate the Tomb where Jesus was buried and rose from the dead.



St. Helena at St. Peter's Basilica, Rome

Saint Helena

Upon the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Catholicism, he sent his mother, Helena, to the Holy Land in the 4th century to search out the holy sites related to Jesus' life on Earth and to build churches at those locations. The early Christians in Jerusalem led her to the temple of the pagan goddess Venus, which was said to have been constructed over Mount Calvary, the Tomb and the True Cross of Christ.

Helena thereupon ordered the destruction of the pagan temple, whereupon three crosses were found, in accord with Sacred Scripture recording that Jesus was crucified along with two thieves. To determine the True Cross of Christ, it is said that the corpse of a young man to be buried was laid upon each of the crosses. It was only after no results with the first two crosses, that at the last cross, the Cross of Christ, that the young man was raised to life. Construction then began on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which still exists at that same place today.



Melchizedek at St. Mary Major Basilica, Rome

Skull of Adam

There is an ancient tradition that associates the Place of the Skull, Golgotha, with the burial place of the first man, Adam. According to this tradition, Adam's skull was buried at this site. It is said that the skull of Adam was passed down through generations, from Noah to his son Shem, and eventually to Melchizedek. It is believed that Shem and Melchizedek retrieved Adam's skull from the Ark's resting place on Mount Ararat and were guided by angels to Golgotha, known thereafter as the "Place of the Skull." Saints Jerome, Cyprian of Carthage, and Ambrose all have associated the place of Adam's Skull to be Calvary.[\[5\]](#)



Chapel Tomb of Adam at Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Tomb of Adam

The ancient architectural structure of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre testifies to the centuries-old belief that Adam's Tomb was located directly under the exact spot where the Cross of Christ was erected on Good Friday. This testimony can be found in the seldom-

seen underground area of the Basilica, where there is a chapel dedicated to the Tomb of Adam.

This chapel features a window on the wall above the Altar that reveals the Rock of Calvary, which is cracked. This crack is traditionally believed to have been caused by the earthquake that occurred when Jesus died on the Cross. The Precious Blood of Christ is said to have flowed down and covered the skull of Adam after the death of Our Lord. This would witness to the connection of the fall of humanity through Adam and mankind's redemption through Christ.



Chapel of the Crucifix at Split Mountain, Gaeta, Italy

Earthquake

“And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent” (Matthew 27:51).[\[6\]](#)

From the Tomb of Adam to the western end of Europe, there is a fissure running through the earth that is said to have been formed at the moment that Our Lord Jesus Christ died on Calvary. Numerous churches have been built along this path as memorials to Our Lord's salvific Death on the Cross, including one on Split Mountain in Gaeta, Italy.^[7]



Bible Moralisée Codex 2554, folio 2v, National Library of Austria in Vienna

Last Adam

In Sacred Scripture, Saint Paul the Apostle (d.67 AD) declared that Adam foreshadows the coming of the Son of God, thus first evidencing the Apostolic Tradition of interpreting the first man as a 'type' of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"The first man, Adam, became a living soul; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (I Corinthians 15:45).^[8]

The Fathers of the Church and others have expounded upon Saint Paul the Apostle's typology between the first Adam from the Garden of Eden, and the last Adam Whose Garden of Gethsemani (aka: Gethsemane) led to Calvary.

St Augustine declares: "Adam sleeps, that Eve may be born; Christ dies, that the Church may be born. When Adam sleeps, Eve is formed from his side; when Christ is dead, the spear pierces His side that the sacraments may flow forth whereby the Church is formed."^[9]

The relationship between the first Adam and his wife, Eve is a foreshadowing of the last Adam, Jesus Christ, and His spotless Bride, the Holy Catholic Church. Just as Eve was born from the side of Adam; so too was the Bride of Christ, the Church, born from the side of Jesus on Good Friday as Our Lord's Side was pierced with a lance. The Church was not born on Pentecost.[\[10\]](#)



Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich

The visionary, Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich (d. 1824 AD), saw Adam after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden weeping at the Mount of Olives (Gethsemani) where Jesus would have His 'Agony in the Garden.' She also had a vision in which she received insight into why Calvary, also known as Golgotha, was known as the Place of the Skull. She saw the tomb of Adam at an immense depth below the rock which constitutes Mount Calvary. She beheld the Cross of Christ placed vertically over the skull of Adam (chapter LIV).[\[11\]](#) This understanding is why numerous traditional Crucifixes and artwork depicted a skull and bones at the foot of Jesus' Cross.



Holy Sepulchre Renovation

During recent renovations of Jesus' Tomb at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, some people have reported experiencing unusual phenomena that they believe to be supernatural.[\[12\]](#) Here are a few examples of such reported abnormalities:

Some workers and visitors have claimed that electrical instruments and devices malfunctioned or behaved erratically without any apparent cause. This included flickering lights, sudden power surges, or complete loss of power in certain areas. Some people have experienced sudden and unexplained changes in temperature while working in or near the tomb. They reported feeling cold drafts or warm gusts of air in specific areas, despite the stable indoor climate.

Like the Shroud of Turin,[\[13\]](#) believed to be the burial cloth of Christ, which was in the Tomb with Jesus at the time of Resurrection, the Holy Sepulchre itself seems to be subject to supernatural realities.



Garden Tomb

In contrast to Catholic Tradition, which dates back to the time of Christ; the Protestant belief in “the Garden Tomb” dates back to the 19th century. It was found by a local farmer in 1867, and it is located in Jerusalem near the Damascus Gate. The Garden Tomb is located near a rocky outcrop known as Skull Hill, which some believe resembles a skull. This site, also known as Gordon’s Calvary, was proposed in the 19th century by Major-General Charles Gordon as the true location of Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified. A rock formation’s skull-like appearance led to this association.[\[14\]](#)

The Garden Tomb is not referred to by any ancient historians or Fathers of the Church. It has no reference to Adam’s skull, and it does not exhibit any supernatural realities. No approved Catholic mystic had envisioned it. It is devoid of Sacred Tradition. It is not Catholic.



Loca do Cabeco in Aljustrel, near Fatima

Cabeco

In the last of the 1916 Angel appearances, at a rocky hilltop near Fatima called the Cabeco, the Angel appeared with a Consecrated Host, from which the Precious Blood of Christ was seen by the three shepherd children dripping into a Chalice. The Portuguese word “*cabeco*” translates to “hilltop,” in reference to one’s head or *cabeca*; calling to mind the Place of the Skull/Golgotha/Mount Calvary.

The prayer taught by the Angel to the three shepherd children is most profound and

includes the words:

“O Most Holy Trinity, Father Son, and Holy Ghost, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the Tabernacles of the world ...”[\[15\]](#)

The link is made here between the Precious Blood of Christ shed on Calvary (the Place of the Skull) with the Precious Blood of Christ really and truly present in the Sacred Host. This Sacred Host is consecrated at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, a re-presentation of Christ’s Sacrifice at Calvary, and reserved in Catholic Tabernacles throughout the world.

Last Adam Reverses First Adam

In conclusion, we can also say that the “Place of the Skull” calls to mind that Jesus Christ, the last Adam, is the reverse of the first Adam:

1. The first Adam was formed by God from the dust/slime of the earth; the last Adam, Jesus Christ, is God Incarnate, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
2. The first Adam gave in to temptation; the last Adam overcame temptation.
3. The first Adam was disobedient to the Will of God the Father in the Garden of Eden; the last Adam issued His Divine Fiat in the Garden of Gethsemani.
4. The first Adam was cast out of the Garden when he brought sin and death into the world; Jesus Christ, the last Adam, entered into the Garden to take the sins of the world upon Himself.
5. The first Adam ate from a living tree and brought us death; the last Adam died on a dead tree to bring us life.
6. The first Adam represents fallen humanity and the consequences of disobedience; the last Adam brings forth a redeemed humanity as a new creation in Christ.
7. The forbidden fruit that the first Adam ate brought death into the world; and the fruit of Jesus’ Death on the Cross is the Most Holy Eucharist, which brings us eternal life.



New Eve

*“And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to Me according to thy word.”
(Luke 1:38)*

When the first Eve said ‘No’ to the Will of God, sin and death entered the world. When the New Eve, the Immaculate Sinless Blessed Virgin Mary, said ‘Yes’ to the Will of God at the Annunciation, She brought new life through Jesus Christ into the world. As Our Lady of Fatima, the Immaculate Heart of Mary showed us, in our time, the way to peace and eternal

happiness.

May we find favor with Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Virgin Mother Mary by always striving to do the Holy Will of God and by resisting temptation to sin. In accord with the Message of Fatima, may we make reparation for sins and participate in the Five First Saturdays Devotion.^[16] Pray the Rosary every day. Always wear the Brown Scapular.

May 'the Place of the Skull,' where Our Lady of Sorrows wept copious tears at the foot of the Cross, remind us of the penalty for sin, our mortality in this world, and the hope of life everlasting in the world to come!

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!

Most Precious Blood of Jesus, have mercy on us!

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us!

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us!

Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!

In Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

[1] <https://www.drbo.org/cgi-bin/d?b=drb&bk=50&ch=19&l=17#x>

[2] [She Will Crush Satan's Head - Catholic Family News](#)

[3] <https://www.drbo.org/lvb/chapter/50019.htm>

[4] <https://johnblood.gitlab.io/haydock/confraternity/id98.html>

[5] [Good Friday & the Hidden Meanings of "Golgotha": Whose Skull Was It?](#)

[6] <https://www.drbo.org/cgi-bin/d?b=drb&bk=47&ch=27&l=51#x>

[7] <https://catholicfamilynews.com/blog/2020/07/12/riots-revolution-rigged-elections-and-the-precious-blood-of-jesus/>

[8] <https://johnblood.gitlab.io/haydock/confraternity/id162.html>

[9] <https://catholicfamilynews.com/blog/2018/05/20/the-church-was-not-born-at-pentecost-cancel-the-birthday-party/>

[10] <https://catholicfamilynews.com/blog/2020/05/31/pentecost-reminder-the-church-was-born-on-good-friday/>

[11] [The bitter Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ – Part 13 – The complete visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich](#)

[12] <https://aleteia.org/2016/11/15/mysteries-surround-the-opening-of-the-tomb-of-christ>

[13] [THREADS OF EVIDENCE: Easter, Calvary, the Last Supper, and the Mass – Catholic Family News](#)

[14] [The Mystery of the Two Tombs | Catholic Answers Magazine](#)

[15] <https://fatima.org/circumstances-and-dialogue-of-the-1916-apparitions/>

[16] [First Saturday Devotion | The Fatima Center](#)