



parapet. Carrying a flag, he looks almost like a soldier emerging from a trench: and part of the power of the image is that, at his feet, the guards are oblivious, since they are all asleep. It is as though you and I, the viewers, are in on the secret with Christ: we are the first witnesses to this central and crucial moment.

The painting is all about movement, and yet it is strangely still. Christ is in the process of rising from death, but there is no drama in his demeanour: he remains calm, composed, serene. His dark eyes gaze straight into ours: we are in communion with him.

## REDISCOVERY

Like so many Renaissance artists, Piero's work – lauded at first – was later neglected. In the eighteenth century it was plastered over and forgotten; and then, remarkably, the painting seemed to resurrect itself. The plaster fell off, the majesty of Christ was revealed again, and the people of Sansepolcro, and of the world beyond, reclaimed the image of their saviour. Today the painting is visible through an outsize window, so it can be seen from the street outside; it's a reminder that the episode it depicts is too important to be shut away for only some to see, and must instead be on display for everyone. It's a potent reminder not only of the endurance of art, but of the story of the pivotal event in human history – the event that changed everything and is as much a part of our lives today as in Piero's time.

## Mass text

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**I have risen, and I am with you still, alleluia.  
You have laid your hand upon me, alleluia.  
Too wonderful for me, this knowledge, alleluia,  
alleluia.**

FIRST READING Acts 10:34. 37-43

PSALM Psalm 117

RESPONSE **This day was made by the Lord;  
we rejoice and are glad.**

Or **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

1. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,  
for his love has no end.  
Let the sons of Israel say:  
"His love has no end." R.
2. The Lord's right hand has triumphed;  
his right hand raised me up.  
I shall not die, I shall live  
and recount his deeds. R.
3. The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the corner stone.  
This is the work of the Lord,  
a marvel in our eyes. R.

SECOND READING Colossians 3:1-4  
or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed;  
let us celebrate the feast then, in the Lord.  
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL John 20:1-9

### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Christ our Passover has been sacrificed,  
alleluia;  
therefore let us keep the feast with the  
unleavened bread  
of purity and truth, alleluia, alleluia.**

### Next Sunday's Readings:

Acts 2:42-47  
1 Peter 1:3-9  
John 20:19-31

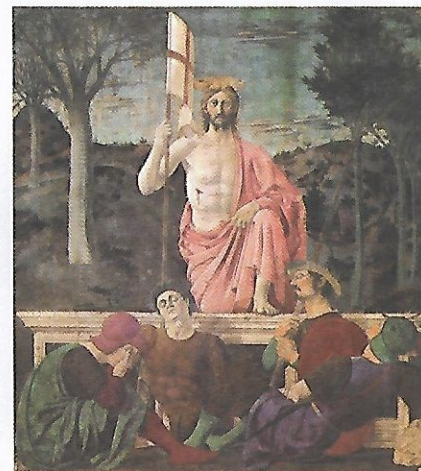


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# SUNDAY BULLETIN

## PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA, *RESURRECTION*

According to the British novelist Aldous Huxley, Piero della Francesca's *Resurrection* is "the greatest picture in the world"; and whether it is or not, it probably only exists today because he wrote those words. They were read by a British army officer called Tony Clarke; and when Clarke found himself in command of an assault on the Tuscan town of Sansepolcro during the Second World War, he remembered them. The painting, a fresco, was on the walls of the town hall there; and if shelling had gone ahead, it might well have been destroyed.



The guns had already started to fire; but prompted by his memory of what Huxley had said, Clarke gave the order to stop. Although his commanding officer was barking over the radio that he needed to hurry up, Clarke instead scoured the town through his binoculars and reported that he could see no Germans. It was a brave call: if the troops advancing on the town had been ambushed, he could have found himself facing a court martial for putting them at risk.

In the event all was well: the Germans had indeed left the town, the troops were safe, the halt in the shelling meant many lives were saved and the painting was unscathed. A few days later Clarke went to see it for himself; perhaps he reflected on the fact that this was an example of art saving lives – or perhaps he pondered on the power of the central story of humankind, the resurrection of Christ, and its ability to change everything.

By the 1940s, the painting was already five hundred years old; and it had already gone through its own "death" and "resurrection". It had been a commission for Piero in the 1460s; he was the local lad made good, recognised as one of the finest painters of his generation, and when it was unveiled to the town leaders, they must have been enthralled. The scene shows Christ emerging from the tomb on Easter Sunday: he is in the very act of climbing out of his coffin, one foot raised as he heads up and over the

## Divine images



On this Easter Sunday we begin a new series for *Sunday Bulletin* in which Joanna Moorhead looks at works of religious art.

12 APRIL 2020

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE  
RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

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DIVINE OFFICE WEEK 1