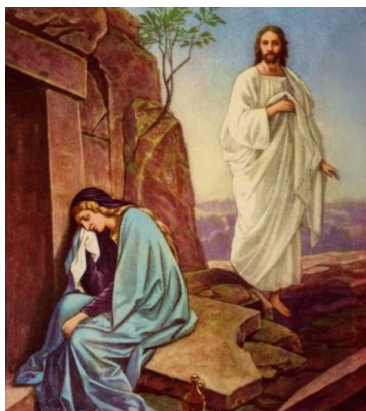




To fully grasp the power of the mystery of the Resurrection, we must first take a moment to reflect on the reality of what happened just before it: the death of Our Lord. Christ, so good—that long-awaited Messiah who brings hope and salvation to the world, the One for whom the apostles had abandoned everything and whose glory was beginning to spread far and wide—was condemned and put to death in less than twenty-four hours. What a shock! Everything comes to a halt. The apostles are devastated. Their Master and Lord is no more. The failure is unbearable. Yes, on this Easter morning, sadness reigns.



But a flame remains. Alone, the Blessed Virgin, despite all evidence to the contrary, continues to believe and upholds the faith of the nascent Church. Mary spent Holy Saturday torn between, on the one hand, an immense, palpable pain—linked to the memory of the Passion still fresh in her mind—and, on the other hand, her faith in the certainty of the Resurrection. Indeed, the memory of the torment her Son endured overwhelms her; it never leaves her and stands before her tearful eyes. She still feels with her whole being that lifeless, torn body she carried in her arms at the foot of the Cross, that once-beautiful face now unrecognizable, that beloved Heart pierced through. Her human sorrow is immense: the perfectly understandable sorrow of a mother, all the more so because no mother has ever loved her child as she did.

That is why, on Holy Saturday, she endured a true agony, alone, just as Jesus had in Gethsemane. But at the same time, in her soul, her unshakable faith in her Son’s Resurrection brings her peace. This faith keeps her alive. That is why, on this Easter morning, she does not run, does not go to the tomb, does not seek Jesus: she waits for him. Her heart, crushed with grief, nevertheless prepares for the shock of their reunion. Perhaps, in this historic moment, she draws a connection to the memory of finding Jesus in the Temple? Perhaps that memory soothes and sustains her.

And suddenly... Her Jesus is there, before Her, radiant with beauty, life, and love. His gaze is fixed on His Mother’s eyes. Their Hearts are reunited once more. Tradition holds, in fact, that on Easter morning, Jesus reserved his first appearance for his Mother, which makes perfect sense. It is worth noting that the Gospel writers do not mention this. Why did they not describe this essential moment? We can see two reasons for this, among others. On the one hand, it is impossible to describe the intensity of that moment; human words are powerless here. On the other hand, the intimacy of that moment belongs solely to the two Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and it is hidden from us. But let us nevertheless try to approach the beauty of their encounter.

Dom Guéranger describes the scene:

“Our Lord Himself was pleased to describe this ineffable scene in a revelation He made to the seraphic Virgin Saint Thérèse. He deigned to confide to her that the divine Mother’s despair was so profound that She would not have been long in succumbing to Her martyrdom, and that when He appeared to Her the moment He had just emerged from the tomb, she needed a few moments to come to her senses before being able to experience such joy; and the Lord adds that He remained with her for a long time, because this prolonged presence was necessary for her. (...)”

What human language would dare to attempt to translate the outpourings of the Son and the Mother at this long-awaited hour? Mary’s eyes, exhausted from weeping and sleeplessness, suddenly opened to the gentle and vivid light that heralded the approach of her Beloved; Jesus’ voice resounding in her ears, no longer with the painful tone that had recently come down from the Cross and pierced her motherly heart like a sword, but joyful and tender, as befits a son who comes to recount his triumphs to the one who gave him birth; the sight of that body she was receiving in her arms; three days ago, bloodied and lifeless, now radiant and full of life.”¹⁰⁶

The fact that Our Lord appeared to the Blessed Virgin first is understandable. She is His Mother. That is enough. But other reasons can be discerned. She is the one who suffered the most after Him. She is the one who kept the faith. It is therefore natural that the honor of this first apparition should fall to her. St. Ignatius of Loyola explains that the Resurrection of Our Lord is the founding act of the Church. Now, this Church is entrusted to the Blessed Virgin, and it is therefore natural that Christ should appear to her first. Many other reasons exist, and it would take too long to list them all here.

After His Mother, Jesus then reserved His second appearance for Saint Mary Magdalene. Here again, this raises questions. Why her before the apostles? Certainly, she was at the foot of the Cross, and Our Lord undoubtedly wanted to thank her for her courage and faithfulness. But Saint John was there as well, and he was not granted this second appearance. The explanation must surely be found in mercy. Christ came to save sinners. Nothing pleases Him more than a repentant sinner. He is the Good Shepherd, so happy to find a lost sheep. He is the father who throws a feast for the prodigal son who returns to him. Saint Mary Magdalene is the symbol of this, she who wept so deeply for her sins. By appearing to her immediately after the Blessed Virgin, Jesus wants to show us just how much a place repentant sinners hold in His Heart.

"I tell you that there will be more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance." (Lk 15:9)

Let us now turn to the fruit of this first glorious mystery: faith. These days, this concept is often misunderstood, and we hear people say, "I have faith because I believe that God exists." Yet this expresses merely a vague belief in a higher being about whom we know very little and who often has no impact on the way we live. This belief is, in fact, a simple, natural, and logical conclusion that anyone can reach. A vast portion of the world believes in a higher being—even Freemasons, who believe in the Great Architect of the Universe. And yet they do not have faith—far from it. This is the source of the well-known misconception: that all religions are equal because, ultimately, we all believe in a higher being, in a God. In short, we all have faith. Yet this is particularly inaccurate. Faith is believing in God as He has been revealed to us. It is believing in God as He is, the Holy Trinity. This is what St. Thomas Aquinas teaches us:

*"There is a twofold truth concerning God: one that rational inquiry can attain—for example, that God exists, that He is one, and other similar truths that philosophers have demonstrated concerning God by the natural light of reason—; the other that transcends the entire capacity of human reason, such as the Trinity of the Divine Persons. There are, therefore, divine truths accessible to reason, and others that entirely transcend reason."*¹⁰⁷

Thus, the Blessed Virgin's faith on Holy Saturday was not to believe in the existence of God. The Blessed Virgin's faith was to believe what Her Son had revealed: His Resurrection. The apostles, who still believed in the existence of God, had lost their faith because they doubted this Resurrection. In other words, faith is believing in the Holy Trinity, in Christ as true God and true man, in the Real Presence in the Eucharist, in the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of God, in the Immaculate Conception, in eternal life... Faith is the Creed. We find this in the great prayer of the Act of Faith:

"My God, I firmly believe all the truths that You have revealed to us and that You teach us through Your Holy Church, because You can neither deceive Yourself nor deceive us."

But faith is not blind. Having faith does not mean that a person cannot then seek to understand the content of the faith with his intellect. St. Anselm of Canterbury beautifully summarized this in a phrase: *"Faith seeking understanding."*¹⁰⁸ This is exactly what the Blessed Virgin did at the Annunciation. Upon hearing the Angel's announcement, she used her intellect to shed light on her faith and asked, *"How can this be...?"* This is also the approach to meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary that she asked of us at Fatima. We begin by believing in the revealed mysteries, and then our intellect enables us to delve deeper into them and understand them better during these fifteen minutes with Her. St. Augustine teaches that faith comes first and understanding follows: *"Believe in order to understand."*¹⁰⁹

So, to conclude, let us pray for all those who do not yet have faith by repeating this beautiful prayer that the Angel of Fatima taught us in 1916 to prepare the young visionaries for the coming of Our Lady:

“My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love You. I ask Your forgiveness for all those who do not believe, who do not adore, who do not hope, and who do not love You.”⁷

Régis de Lassus

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Fatima First Saturdays Alliance

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