

reason, too, that the Holy Sepulcher will become the dearest, most loved and most visited of Christian shrines.

Afterwards various apparitions of the Risen One will follow, for which the disciples of Jesus will pass on from one to the other the joyous news: "Jesus Christ lives!" Even today, after 2000 years, the responsibility of Christians is to shout to all: "Jesus Christ lives!" It is this happy news that saves.

REFLECTIONS:

About Mary — Her faith is heroic, but there is no doubt that it had a strong foundation which nurtured it, and it is the same basis on which our faith is also nurtured: incessant prayer and a profound meditation on the words and works of her Son. Without these helps even her faith would not have been sustained. When the Bible speaks to us about the faith of Abraham, it tells us that he believed against all hope, that is against all the evidence the facts presented. Pope John Paul II used to say that Mary's faith is greater than that of Abraham. Abraham did not see his son die; Mary did. But she believed all the same.

About us — The promises of God never become less, as His love and His aid do not become less. When things go well it can seem very easy to have faith; but faith is tried in the midst of contradictions. The observation that the greatest sorrows, the greatest sufferings put our faith to the test is true for everyone: either it becomes stronger or we lose it. Even we need to have recourse to the double aid, of prayer and meditation on the word of God.

**(excerpted from: The Gospel of Mary by Fr. Gabriel Amorth)*

Saint Alphonsus Liguori, writes: It is well known that Saturday has been set aside by the Church as Mary's Day because it was on the Sabbath after the death of her Son that she remained unshaken in her faith. For this reason, the clients of Mary are careful to honor her on that day by some particular devotion and especially by fasting... I affirm that those who practice this devotion can hardly be lost; not that I mean to say that if they die in mortal sin the Blessed Virgin will deliver them, but that those who practice it will, through Mary's help, find perseverance in God's grace easy and obtain from her a happy death. All the members of our little Congregation who are able to do so practice this devotion. I say those who are able to do so; for if our health does not permit it, at least we should on Saturdays content ourselves with one dish at a meal, or observe an ordinary fast, or abstain from fruit, or something for which we have a relish. On Saturdays we should always practice some devotion in honor of Our Blessed Lady, receive Holy Communion, or hear Mass, visit an image of Mary, or something of that sort. * (from The Glories of Mary)*

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Mary's Day The Sabbath



Prayer for Strength

I feel but little devotion; my soul is dry and sluggish;
yet I believe in Thee, I love Thee.

I grieve for having ever offended Thee.

Behold my resolution to live entirely for Thee;
to be patient in sufferings, diligent in the fulfillment of my duties,
humble before Thee, devout in Thy service.

Holy Immaculate Mother of my Jesus, pray for me, a poor sinner.

Taken from HIS FAVORITE PRAYERS: St. John Neumann

Mary's Day The Sabbath

**It* almost seems that, in the great Paschal Triduum, there is a void, a silent and pregnant pause, between the crucifixion and the resurrection. But this void is filled by a person whose heart is full of hope and certitude, because her faith, and only her faith, has not crumbled. God has foretold in Genesis that she would be the sign that the Savior would come; her birth is saluted as the breaking dawn that foretells the sun, Christ. Holy Saturday is the day usually given to Mary, and the practice of celebrating "Mary's Hour" on that day is becoming ever more widespread. In all the world hope is alive only in her, because only she awaits faithfully the hour of triumph.

The others, no. For the others that Sabbath is yet another day of anguish, rich only in sorrowful memories, the unknown, darkness. The thoughts of the main witnesses could not dwell on anything other than that sad recollection: The atrocious death of Jesus, with its humiliating contours, made still more shameful by the conduct of His friends. The betrayal of Judas, who had put an end to his life as an apostle with that desperation that brought him to hang himself, had been consummated; Satan had truly entered into him. Peter, so impulsive and generous, after his triple denial, had no other alternative than to shed bitter tears of regret. The other apostles knew no better way out than to flee; they were not yet able to throw off their fear of being hunted, and so they stayed behind closed doors. Even the women, the more faithful to Jesus, mingled with their tears a sole practical preoccupation: that of finishing the embalming of the dead body of Christ, since on that Friday evening His burial had taken place so hastily because the "Great Sabbath" was about to begin.

The loss of all hope and the impression that "everything was finished" is evident in all of them. They never would have thought that "everything was about to begin." None of them thought that the blood poured out for the New Covenant signaled the way for the new People of God. The Resurrection will come as one of those surprises that one finds difficult to believe, for which proofs will follow one after the other. First the empty tomb and the angels who proclaim: "He is not here. He has risen." Then the various apparitions to individuals, groups, a crowd of about five hundred faithful. The paschal liturgy will be characterized by the joyous song addressed to the Virgin: "Rejoice, O Queen of heaven, rejoice; the Son whom you merited to bear has risen as He said. Alleluia."

But meanwhile, on that silent Sabbath, the torch of humanity's faith is wholly and only burning brightly in Mary. For her it would have been a great liberation to be able to die with her Son; but she had to initiate her new mission as our mother, which she received from her agonizing Son. Even to this she had given her *fiat*; and her mission began right then on that Sabbath, offering to God something very precious, of which no one took notice: an unflinching faith.

She alone believes and thinks what no one else thinks or believes; she alone is prepared for the great event, which no one else expected. She may perhaps have reflected on that third day in which she found Jesus in the Temple; or to another third day when her Son arrived in Cana and changed the water into wine; or to Holy Thursday when He had changed the wine into His Blood. Perhaps she thought back to the words, undoubtedly referring to His Resurrection, that Jesus foretelling His Passion always ended with, a phrase which the apostles never understood: "And on the third day He will rise." It is certain that her heart was full of hope and certitude.

And yet that Sabbath unfolded strangely. The guards took turns watching over the sealed tomb. With the cadaver inside, as if man could put limits on the omnipotence of God. All the people throughout the city were feasting because they were celebrating the Passover; they were not aware that their Passover was a prophetic sign of a great reality that had begun in sorrow and was about to be fulfilled in joy. A tomb under strict surveillance, the celebration of a rite which has no more sense, are two of the many anachronisms of that day in which the only valid thing is the faith of Mary, her certainty about that which was about to happen and which will definitively turn around the prospects of human life.

Thus Saturday will become Mary's day, the day of preparation for the Sunday of the resurrection which will supplant the Hebrew Sabbath as the feast day for all Christians. There will be a gradual cultural and liturgical deepening, arriving in the ninth century at an official dedication of Saturday to Mary with the Mass and Office proper to the Virgin. But the first step, the point of departure, lies precisely in the importance that the Madonna had on that Holy Saturday.

The dawn of Sunday finally broke. We see a small group of women, very early in the morning, arriving at the sepulcher. They are the same ones whom we saw at the foot of the cross. But one is missing, the most important. How in the world is it that Mary is not with them? It is a meaningful absence. Perhaps the risen Lord has already appeared to her, even if the Gospels do not say so. Or perhaps she is so certain of His resurrection that she did not make the mistake that the other women made, to seek the living among the dead. We can think what we like, but we can be sure that she didn't go to the tomb because there was a strong reason which held her back.

The women, admirable for their fidelity and their zeal will find a surprise: the tomb is empty. Because of this even the mute stones take on a special importance. By the fact of the tomb's being empty they become the first witnesses to the resurrection of Christ. And it is for this