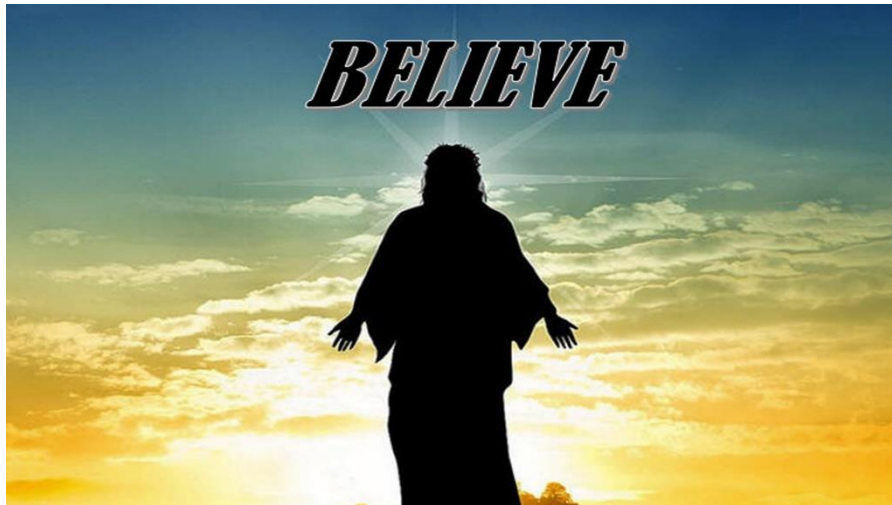


1st Glorious Mystery: The Resurrection of Jesus



It's morning, three days since Jesus was executed. You're still in shock over what happened on Friday, and if not for the friendship of Jesus' mother, young John, Mary Magdalen and those others who stayed with him throughout his passion, you're not sure where you'd be or what you would do. As emotionally draining as these three days have been, you can't help but feel grateful for the friendships you've developed with these good people, especially with Mother Mary, who has been the stabilizing force within the group, the one person everyone naturally leans on for comfort and strength. With Mary by your side, you feel as if Jesus is still present with you, and the more time you spend with her, the more you realize and appreciate just how special she is. You've never met anyone quite like her!

Rousing yourself from sleep, you look for Mary Magdalen, who has also become a close friend and confidant, but she is nowhere to be found. When you ask, Mother Mary tells you that she went to the place where Jesus was buried to anoint his body properly according to the Jewish custom. Suddenly you hear a scuffle outside and people engaged in a lively conversation. When you go out to investigate you see that Mary Magdalen has returned and you pick up on the conversation. Mary says: *"When I arrived at the tomb, I just started weeping uncontrollably. Then I saw a man standing there, but I did not know who he was. He asked me why I was weeping. I thought it was a gardener, so I said to him: Sir, if you have taken the body of Jesus, please tell me where you have laid him. Then with a familiar look of love and compassion, the man said my name: 'Mary!' At once I recognized him – it was Jesus! I could not believe my eyes. Immobilized momentarily I just stared at him, wondering whether I was seeing a ghost! Again he said my name: 'Mary!' Immediately I ran toward him, but he stopped me and said: 'Do not cling to me Mary, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Go, tell my brothers what you have seen and tell them to meet me in Galilee and they too will see me.'*

Needless to say we all were in shock, all except Mother Mary. I looked at her, and she at me. She did not say a word - she didn't have to. Her look said everything I needed to hear – one word: **Believe!**

2nd Glorious Mystery – Ascension of Jesus



Never could you have imagined the things you experienced over the past several years or the people you've come to know and love. It all began the day you first met Jesus. The time you spent with him, with his Mother Mary, Mary Magdalen and others of his close friends has been life-changing. During the last two months, you witnessed him being betrayed by Judas Iscariot, abandoned by several of his closest friends and mercilessly crucified. Most recently however, you learned that Jesus has risen from the dead and appeared several times to people you know and trust. Although you've never seen him, you do not doubt the truth of it, especially given the testimony of Mary Magdalen. As wonderful as this news is, you can't help but wonder: *"why hasn't he come to me?"* In a way you feel slighted, but then as if reading your thoughts, Mother Mary turns to you and says: *'Child, Thomas acknowledged Jesus as Lord and God only after having put his hands into the nail marks in Jesus' wrists, but remember what Jesus then said to him: **"Have you come to believe Thomas because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."*** Hearing her describe this encounter, you can't help but feel ashamed. Then Mary faces you, takes both your hands in hers and once again looks into your eyes as she squeezes your hands, lovingly nods her head, turns and walks away. For a moment time seems to have stopped, and again you say to yourself: *"never have I met anyone like her!"*

It's Thursday, approximately forty days since the news of Jesus' resurrection. While sitting in the home of one of his disciples, Peter, James, young John and the other eight who were his closest companions enter the house. It's obvious that something remarkable has happened and you wait to hear the news as the men file in. With you are Mother Mary, Mary Magdalen and several others. Once everyone is settled, Peter says: *'The last time we saw Jesus, he told us to go to the mountain in Galilee where he*

often went to pray. We went, even though many of us still harbored doubt in our hearts, all but young John here, who never doubted, not even for a moment! Then Jesus suddenly appeared and approached us. In that instance, James asked: ‘Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ Jesus said: **“It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”** Then he said: **“All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”**

Then he raised his hands, and as he blessed us he parted and was taken up to heaven. We just stood there transfixed and although we did not want him to leave us, we were overcome with joy, and immediately departed that place to return here to Jerusalem, to share this news with you!’ As is usually the case in situations like this, you are left speechless. You look at Mother Mary, who simply smiles at you; no words, just that beautiful, reassuring smile.

3rd Glorious Mystery: The Descent of the Holy Spirit



Lying down at night alone with your thoughts, you can't help but feel extremely thankful for your new-found way of life as a disciple of Jesus. You are especially grateful for your friendships with his mother Mary, Mary Magdalen and the other disciples. You recall how just a few days ago James, one of the remaining eleven apostles baptized you, and the feeling of being engulfed in the womb of God's love when he lowered you beneath the warm waters of the River Jordan. Then lifting you up again, you

remember the water washing off your body and the sensation of being cleansed, as if being reborn into something new and beautiful. The experience was something you will never forget.

Since then, your days have been spent with your friends, who share everything in common, such that no one is left wanting. In the evening, you gather together listening to Jesus' apostles, share stories of their experiences with him. They talked about the time on the mountain when Jesus was teaching the crowds about the blessings being humble, righteous, merciful and even being sorrowful. They talked about the cure of the man who was paralyzed and of another who was blind. They recalled how Jesus cried when he met the sisters of his friend Lazarus who had died and how he then miraculously raised him from the dead. Then with a sense of pride they told the story of the time they saw Jesus angry, turning over the tables of money changers in the Jerusalem Temple. All these amazing stories confirm your belief that Jesus is in fact, the Son of God!

This morning, you are sitting with your friends and are about to enjoy a simple breakfast consisting of bread, cheese, fresh figs and dates. As always, one of the apostles offers a prayer of thanksgiving to God which of late, concludes with the words: *"in the name of Jesus the Christ!"* While sitting there enjoying the meal, the house is suddenly rocked by a hot driving wind, like that of a sandstorm, but there is no sand – just heat. Everyone is startled and a bit concerned, as a strange light suffuses the room. The light then breaks up and surrounds each person in what looks like flame, but no one is burned. As on the day of your baptism, you find yourself once again engulfed in the love of God. You feel his power cleansing you, enlightening you, empowering you. Then as the ecstasy wanes, it becomes apparent to everyone that something remarkable has happened, and there remains an inexplicable energy present in the room. After a several moments, Jesus' mother Mary stands, raises her eyes to heaven and says the words she once spoke after a similar encounter with the divine: ***"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my salvation!"*** Awestruck and overwhelmed, you and everyone else remains blissfully silent in the realization that from this moment on, everything changes!

4th Glorious Mystery: The Assumption of the Virgin Mary



Ever since that momentous day when you, along with Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalen and the other disciples were suffused with the power of the Holy Spirit, the community of believers has continued to grow, but not without difficulties, even at times with hostile resistance. This was certainly the case when Peter and John would go into the Temple precincts proclaiming salvation in the name of Jesus. Each time they would be incarcerated, beaten, reprimanded, and released. You can't help but be amazed at their resilience and commitment knowing how only a short time ago, they were reluctant to show themselves in public. You realize that this remarkable turnaround was the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon you, on the Jewish feast of Pentecost. Since that day, Peter has risen in word and deed to become the "rock" upon whom Jesus promised to build his church. There is however, another person who has assumed a role of leadership in the group; Jesus' mother Mary. Her presence has become a formidable source of inspiration, strength, power, wisdom and love. Together, Peter and Mary have confirmed in you and others, a faith stronger than death, as attested to by many among the group who have since been killed for of their allegiance to Jesus.

For the past few months, you have been traveling with several disciples, proclaiming to those who would listen, the message of our Lord, and upon your return to the "Christians" in Jerusalem (that's what they call you now), you learn that Jesus' mother has died. In retrospect, it was obvious that her body was beginning to fail, but her mind and her indomitable spirit had remained unflagging sources of inspiration to you and the other disciples. Mary Magdalen had been taking care of her for a while now, and told you about the many confidences that Mary shared with her. You sense that she was

preparing Magdalen to assume what in your mind, was a rightful place of leadership within the burgeoning Christian community. She then related that on the day of Mary's passing, there was naturally a great deal of sadness among the people, but an astonishing sense of joy as well, which she attributed to the community's faith in the resurrection of Jesus.

Now, several days later, in the course of sharing a meal with your friends, Mary Magdalen suddenly enters the room. Short of breath and obviously excited, she tells you that when she went to visit the tomb where Mary was buried, she found that her body was missing! She explains how this was evocative of when she went to the tomb of Jesus on the day of his resurrection. She then tells you that two men in dazzling garments appeared and said: *"Mary is not here! She who bore the Son of God in her womb has been taken up to heaven, body and soul. Go, share this good news with the eleven and all the others. Tell them not to persist in unbelief, but to believe!"* Then the two men disappeared! Naturally you are overwhelmed, and immediately your mind is flooded with reminiscences of Jesus and the many things he told you would happen after his death and resurrection. Then the words of the men at Mary's tomb resound in your mind: *"do not to persist in unbelief, but believe!"*



5th Glorious Mystery: Mary is Crowned Queen of Heaven



In this last of the Glorious Mysteries, the Crowning of Mary as Queen of Heaven, I reference the vision of the woman and the dragon by a man who called himself John, and who is said to be the author of the Book of Revelation. I want to qualify that only the following paragraph has been excerpted from the Book of Revelation, with minor editing. The rest is my attempt at portraying John's experience.

"I, John, your brother, who share with you the distress, the kingdom, and the endurance we have in Jesus, find myself exiled on the island called Patmos because I proclaimed God's word and gave testimony to Jesus. While in the course of my banishment, I saw God's temple in heaven, and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a violent hailstorm. And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. Then I saw a huge red dragon who stood before the woman to devour her child when she gave birth. She gave birth to a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod, who was caught up to God and his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert where God had prepared a place to care for her. Then war broke out in heaven. I saw Michael and his angels battle against the dragon who was called the Devil, or Satan. The dragon and its angels fought back, but they did not prevail. Then Satan and his angels were thrown down from heaven to earth. It was then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have salvation and power come, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Anointed..."

While still reeling from the visions, I regain my faculties and realize that I am back on the island of my exile. I recall the time I spent with Jesus' disciples and with Mary, the mother of my Lord, and I realize that the woman I saw in the vision who ***“was clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head,”*** was Mother Mary.



She who suffered the passion of her son has been exalted above all women on account her role in the redemption of God's people through Jesus' death and resurrection. She was like a mother to me, but now she reigns in glory with Jesus, crowned as Queen of Heaven and Earth, mother of the entire human race.

I am overcome with exhaustion as I write in the aftermath of the remarkable visions. I sense that I am going to drift into sleep, but as I do, these words pour into my head, and I have written them down, so as never to forget: ***“Hail Holy Queen..., Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death..., Hail Holy Queen!***

Deacon Ernie