

Mary, Mother of the Light and Salvation*

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Abstract: *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, I will fear no one. The Lord protects me from all danger; I will never be afraid! (Ps. 27:1).*

The psalm is very definitive about the Lord being our Light and Salvation, which is a proclamation of faith, trust, and confidence of one who relies in God's unwavering protection and providence. In His public ministry, Jesus openly proclaimed: *I am the Light of the world, he who follows me will never walk in darkness!* (Jn 8:12). St. Paul also affirmed that, *our hopes are fixed on the living God who is the savior of all men* (1 Tim 4:10) and, *there is but one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Tim 2:5-6).

This article relates to Mary as the Mother of Light and Salvation and in particular, her image as the light and salvation in the life of Christians, which earned her the titles: *Nuestra Señora de la Luz* and *Nuestra Señora de Salvación*. Questions were raised before when the Church referred to Mary as the co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix between God and men that were misunderstood and greatly taken out of context. In this regard, how does Mary appear to be the "light and salvation" without prejudice to the dogma of faith that Jesus is the one Savior and Light of the world?

This article will revive the traditional Marian titles in line with renewed evangelization, that is, a renewed Mariology in line with her Son's redemptive work.

Keywords: Our Lady of the Light, Salvación, Theotokos, Eleóusa, Hodegéttria, Light and Salvation, Our Lady of the Passion, New Evangelization, Mariology.

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I praise you, Lord because you have saved me and kept my enemies from gloating over me. I cried to you for help, O Lord, my God, and you healed me; you kept me from the grave. I was on my way to the depths below, but you restore my life (Ps 30:1-3).

This passage from the Psalms reveals man's longing for salvation and a prayerful supplication for a continuing protection from God. For alone and unaided, man falls prey to the evil one and can easily give in to his frail nature. His trust and confidence in the saving power of God and His divine intervention keep him steadfast to his faith and hope: *The Lord protects the helpless; when I was in danger, he saved me* (Ps 116:6). This confident attitude rooted in faith and hope is extended to Mary who is believed to be an intermediary, a *Mediatrice* between God and man, and as such, she is similarly implored by her children to intercede for them. However, this title for Mary has flared some controversies that question the extent of her mediatory role in salvation. This is justified by the fact that her role in salvation history is participative and subordinate to the mediation of Christ before God and her being mediatrix between Christ and men. Her mediation consists principally in praying to her Son in order to obtain for her children the application of the fruits of redemption. Mary's role is viewed always from the context of her being associated with Christ while cooperating with Him in the great work of salvation and the fruits that come with it.¹ This chapter will therefore, expound on the role of Mary as she acts as the go-between her Son and her other children in their quest for salvation and deliverance from the woes of this earthly journey.

The original image of *Maria Santissima del Lume* is pregnant with symbolic meanings that are in line with the dogmas of faith and the teachings of the Church and therefore, presents a sound theological doctrine. We will then discuss the theology behind the image of Mary as *Salvación* with scriptural basis and with reference to the writings of the Fathers of the Church that developed into what we now call Mariology. It will focus on Mary as a figure of salvation according to the divine plan since the beginning of time. Acknowledged as *Mater Christianorum*, she is revered as a figure of salvation in relation to her Son being His mother, and the mother of the Christian people who decided to follow Him in faith. The pervading question will be, "From what angle is she considered *Salvación*?" because, calling her under this title seems to be in conflict with her Son's role as, truly and solely the *Salvator hominum* (1 Tim 2:15). In answer to this query, the Church through its teaching authority had issued dogmatic proclamations particularly through its Ecumenical Councils to enlighten and guide the people of God on the special role of Mary in collaboration with her Son's redemptive mission. Nevertheless, as the Mother of God, she is always

¹ See Pietro Parente, *Dictionary of Dogmatic Theology*, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1957, s.v. "Mediation," pp. 182-183.

identified with her Son from the very first moment of His incarnation until His passion, death, and resurrection. Like a mother and her child are inseparable, and so, Mary is inseparable from her union with Christ, because her role as mother of the people of God flows directly from her role of being the Mother of God.²

Mary Prefigured in the Salvation History

Proto-Evangelium

The first hint of Mary's role in the history of salvation which biblical scholars and theologians use as a starting point of Mariology is the *Proto-evangelium*: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head and you will strike its heel* (Gen 3:15).³ Christian tradition has seen this passage as the first announcement of the good news of salvation.⁴ At the beginning of the Fall was a woman Eve, "despite her disobedience, she received a promise of a posterity that will be victorious over the evil one, as well as the promise that she will be the mother of all the living."⁵ Two figures are in the limelight: a woman and her offspring who will eventually win over the works of the devil. The *proto-evangelium* therefore, is the promise of hope to the chosen people of God that will restore the original friendship with Him, while looking forward to a sign which the prophet Isaiah prophesied: *The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel* (Is 7:14). The "virgin" is the "woman" spoken of by Genesis (3:15) at the beginning who will bring Savior of the world and the "woman" spoken of by the Apocalypse (12:1) at the end of the history of salvation.⁶ These narratives in the books of Genesis and Revelation prefigured Mary's role in the history of salvation as the mother of a messianic offspring, the Christ.

The Fall is the loss of man's intimacy with God and sin is passed on to the descendants of the first parents of humanity. To this fall from the original condition of

² CCC, no. 964.

³ The Jerusalem Bible comments on this passage: "By proclaiming that the offspring of the serpent is henceforth at enmity with the woman's descendants, opposes the human race to the devil and his 'seeds,' his posterity, and hints at man's ultimate victory; it is the first glimmer of salvation—the *proto-evangelium*. The Greek version has a masculine pronoun ("he" not "it" will crush...) thus ascribing the victory not to the woman's descendants in general but to one of her sons in particular: the words of the Greek version therefore express the messianic interpretation held by many of the Fathers. The Latin version has a feminine pronoun ("she" will crush...) and since in the messianic interpretation, **the Messiah and his mother appear together**, the pronoun has been taken to refer to Mary; this application has become current in the Church." See Jerusalem Bible, Gen 3:15, see footnote **b**.

⁴ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, PAU-RED, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 2003, s.v. "*Proto-Evangelium*."

⁵ CCC, no. 489.

⁶ See *JPII, Redemptoris Mater (RMat)*, no. 24. The good Pope also figured out Mary as the "Woman" addressed by Christ at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25-27).

man, death is added.⁷ But, St. Augustine called it *Felix Culpa*,⁸ a “happy fault,” because it is but a beginning of God’s never-ending redemptive work and the unfolding of His divine plan by bringing about the greater good of the Redeemer’s Incarnation culminated in His supreme act of sacrifice, as St. Paul puts it: *Where sin abounded, grace super-abounded, so that just as sin reigned in death, grace might reign by putting men into a right relationship with God that they might have eternal life* (Rom 5:20-21). After the fall, God did not abandon man totally “but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in anticipation of Christ the Redeemer.”⁹ It was the hope of salvation, by the promise of redemption (*proto-evangelium*) that God buoyed up man’s spirit, and He has never ceased to show His solicitude to the human race.¹⁰

St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans

St. Paul made comparative images to illustrate the fall and redemption of man by citing a correlation of Adam and Christ. He clearly made reference of the narrative of the fall and its consequences to the narrative of Christ’s redemptive work and its merits. He names Christ as the “new Adam” in Romans 5:12-19:

Just as through one man sin entered the world and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned... If death began its reign through one man because of his offense, much more shall those who receive the overflowing grace and gift of justice live and reign through one man, Jesus Christ.

This passage gives us contrasting realities about death and life, sin and grace, disobedience and obedience, punishment and atonement, condemnation and justification that refer to Adam, the author of the fall of man, and Jesus Christ, the new Adam, the author of man’s universal redemption. The summary of St. Paul’s theology of the fall of man is: By the sin of Adam, all men became sinners and were alienated from God; by the righteousness of Christ, all men became righteous and restored the right relationship with God.¹¹ This he further reiterated in his First Letter to the Corinthians 15:21: *Death came through one man, hence the resurrection of the dead comes through a man also. Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will come to life again.*

But the focal point of the teaching of St. Paul is the messianic role of Christ in the history of salvation to destroy the ancient curse of sin and death that has befallen on mankind. Christ is the “new Adam” that brought justification and redemption to the world in contrast with the “old Adam.” But it also created a similar allusion to

⁷ Jerusalem Bible, Gen 3:16; see, footnote d.

⁸ From *Exultet* of the Easter Vigil: *O felix culpa quae talem et tantum meruit habere redemptorem*, (*O happy fault that merited such and so great a Redeemer*).

⁹ *Lumen Gentium* (LG), no. 2.

¹⁰ See, CCC no. 55.

¹¹ William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, p. 78.

a “woman” who participated in His work of redemption, the “new Eve” in contrast with the “old Eve.” This was developed in the second century by the holy Fathers presenting Mary as the “new Eve,” most closely associated with the “new Adam” though subject to Him in the struggle against the enemy from the nether world.¹² To wit, just as a woman was instrumental in the fall of humanity, so also, a woman was instrumental in the redemption of humanity. Or in a wider scenario, just as the fall of humanity was caused by the sin of a man and a woman, likewise, the redemption of mankind was brought to fulfillment by a one man Jesus Christ and the **participative** role of a woman, Mary, His mother.

Fathers of the Church: Mary, the New Eve

The Fathers of the Church basically expounded the contrasting relationship between Adam and Christ and described the same allusion to Eve and Mary. Mary is named the “new Eve” as Christ is named the “new Adam” to illustrate their collaborative works in salvation history. The Fathers, namely St. Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, had influenced the later writings of St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine calling Mary as the “Mother of the living.”¹³

a. **St. Justin Martyr** (d. 165) was one in thought with St. Irenaeus in the later period when he said: *It was right and necessary that Adam be restored in Christ... that Eve be restored in Mary so that a Virgin become advocate of a virgin [Eve], might erase and abolish the disobedience of a virgin by her [Mary's] obedience as a Virgin.* The bigger picture of the fall and rise of man to redemption was the parallelism of Adam and Eve to Christ and Mary, disobedience against obedience, sin and grace, death and life. Just as the fall was in effect the work of the first couple Adam and Eve, in the same manner did Christ with Mary in a subordinate role as the “bearer of the Savior” restored the lost friendship of God and man.

b. **St. Irenaeus** (d. 202) wrote in his treatise *Against the Heresies* that the basis of the fall of man is disobedience of one woman, hence sin and death entered into the world. In the same manner, the obedience of one Woman through faith and submission to the will of God brought the bringer of salvation and life to the world. Mary's obedience (“*fat*”) is expressed in words of acceptance to the will of God: *Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word* (Lk1:38). In contrast, Eve who was yet a virgin, disobeyed God's will:

Being obedient, she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race. Thus it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was

¹² See, *Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. IV, Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary, Second Reading taken from the apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* by Pius XII, pp. 1321-1322.

¹³ Anthony Buono, *The Greatest Marian Titles*, Makati City: St. Paul's, 2008, p. 162.

loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the Virgin Mary set free through faith... And if the former did disobey God, yet the latter was persuaded to be obedient to God, in order that the Virgin Mary might become the patroness of the virgin Eve. Thus the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so, it is rescued by a virgin. Virginal disobedience was balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience.¹⁴

In saying this, St. Irenaeus demonstrated that the sin of Eve was in collaboration with Adam, and so, a virgin caused the fall of man. On the other hand, he defined Mary's collaborative role in the economy of salvation, that is, she, being a virgin facilitated the redemption of man, the figure of a woman in *proto-evangelium*. Her womb became the "sacred vessel" that carried the incarnate Son of God. Hence, in contrast with Eve, Mary is called "the Mother of the living," that is, she brought Christ to life that in turn restored life to the world. As the Fathers put it: "Death through Eve, life through Mary."¹⁵ Through Eve, the gates of heaven were closed to all mankind; through the Virgin Mary, they were opened wide again, alleluia!¹⁶

c. **Tertullian** (d. 230), on the other hand, introduced the symbolism of Christ falling into a deep sleep on the Cross, and during that sleep of the New Adam, there was born from His side the Church, the New Eve, the Mother of the living. The Church becomes the "New Eve," the Mother of the living when she brings forth the children of God in the order of grace through the sacraments beginning with Baptism.¹⁷ This doctrine alludes to the creation of the woman in the book of Genesis when God *made man fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took out one of man's ribs and close up the flesh. He formed the woman out of the rib* (Gen 2:21-22). In this symbolic birth of the Church when Christ slept the sleep of death on the Cross, Mary was present at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25-27), as she was present in the midst of the early Church *who devoted themselves in constant prayer* until the day of Pentecost (Acts: 1:14; 2:1-4), the historical birth of the Church. With this Mary was given the title *Mater Ecclesiae*.

d. **St. John Chrysostom** (347-407), archbishop of Constantinople, on the other hand, complemented the teaching of St. Irenaeus with a more graphic presentation of the Fall and Redemption of man when he said:

Christ conquered the devil using the same means and the same weapons that the devil used to win... the symbols of our fall were a virgin, a tree, and death. The virgin was Eve (for she had not yet known man); then there was the tree; and death was Adam's penalty... Instead of Eve there was Mary;

¹⁴ Mike Aquilina, *The Fathers of the Church*, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1999, p. 90.

¹⁵ CCC, no. 494 as quoted from LG no. 56 and Epiphanius.

¹⁶ Antiphon, *Common of the BVM, Liturgy of the Hours*.

¹⁷ See, Buono, p. 162.

instead of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the wood of the cross; instead of Adam's death, the death of Christ...By the tree the devil laid Adam low, and by the tree Christ defeated him. The first tree sent men to the world below, but the second called back those who had already gone down. The first tree buried man, already naked and captive; the second revealed the victor naked to all the world. The first death condemned those who were born afterward, but the second death raised up even those who were born before...Though dead we became immortal. Such is the great achievement of the cross.¹⁸

The disobedience of Eve that brought the downfall of humanity is directly in contrast with Mary's obedience that gave way to the salvation of the human race. Moreover, in a similar scenario, while Jesus submitted His will to the will of the Father—*Not my will, but your will be done* (Lk 22:42), in like manner did Mary submit to the will of God with her *fiat*: *Let it be done to me according to your word* (Lk 1:38). In line with this, by pronouncing her *fiat* at the Annunciation and giving her consent to the Incarnation, Mary was already collaborating with the whole work her Son was to accomplish.¹⁹ The obedience of the Son and the Mother to the will of the Father brought salvation to the world and erased the ancient curse of sin and death of Adam and Eve, as St. John Chrysostom taught: *Christ conquered the devil using the same means and same weapons that the devil used to win: a virgin, tree, and death*. With this statement, John Chrysostom used additional contrasting images: the tree (of the knowledge of good and evil) and the Cross. The centerpiece is the Cross—to which the obedience of Christ to the will of God was directed and fully accomplished. It was the Cross that sealed the completion of Christ's mission through His death, but changed its image as the sign of salvation rather than condemnation, justification rather than punishment, glory rather than shame, life rather than death.

To summarize, the early Fathers contrasted Eve, the “mother of the living” (Gen 3:20), who brought sin and death into the world, with Mary who gave birth to the Victor over sin and death thus, became in her own right, the “mother of all the living” in the order of grace:

The first Eve let herself be enslaved by the devil, while the new Eve experienced the freedom of soul given by the Spirit to those who are open to him. She responded to God with complete acceptance. She gave free and full consent to the event of the ages, which with the advent of the Divine Son, the New Adam, ushered in the new creation.²⁰

¹⁸ Homily of St. John Chrysostom, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Memorial of the Blessed Virgin on Saturday.

¹⁹ CCC, no. 973.

²⁰ See, Buono, p. 162.

Two women became contrasting images of the fall and rise of humanity, one is the recipient of the *proto-evangelium*, the other is its fulfillment; one is the cause of Original sin, the other is immaculately conceived without Original sin in the fullness of God's grace, so that in the process of redemption, the stigma of sin will be erased; one disobeyed God by the insinuation of the Devil, the other obeyed God by the annunciation of the Angel. This contrast between Mary as the "new Eve" and the "old Eve" was graphically presented by Fra Angelico da Fiesole, a Dominican painter-artist in a beautiful fresco at the Dominican convent at San Marco in Florence: while the angel Gabriel announced the "good news of Incarnation" to Mary, somewhere at the background was an angel expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.

The Theology of Light and Salvation

The Lord is my light and my salvation, I will fear no one. The Lord protects me from all danger; I will never be afraid (Ps 27:1).

In the course of biblical history, the people of Israel acknowledge God as their light and salvation. The presence of light is always associated with the presence of God, and conversely, God reveals and manifests Himself in the brilliance of light. The light that God shows to His people is always the hope of salvation and redemption, which above all, manifests His providential care and fatherly protection. The power of light is associated with the power of God; the light that overcomes darkness is the image of God who created everything and has power over everything. In fact, at the beginning when everything was formless and desolate, the very first initiative of God was to create light, then, He separated the light from darkness (Gen 1:3). From then on, it is light that exposes the beauty and wonder of God's creation day and night: the sun to rule the day, and with the moon and the stars at night, together He decorated the universe with many forms of light that flicker in the darkness, so that while looking up to heaven, one will wonder that there is an all-powerful Being beyond the limits of the universe. For a long time, God is hidden in the inmost recess of high heavens. But, the omnipotent invisible God was made manifest in Christ: *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father* (Jn 14:6). It is Christ to whom the world looks up to as the Light and Salvation of the world: *I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness* (Jn 8:12). Along this line, we then go through the images of God's revealing light and salvation that abound in the many passages and narratives of Sacred Scriptures.

Old Testament: Let there be light (Gen 1:3)

God's revealing presence all began in the creation of the light: *Let there be light!* (Gen 1:3), and *He called the light day* (Gen 1:5). He revealed Himself to Moses

as *I AM WHO AM* in the burning bush (Ex 3:14). God showed Himself in dazzling splendor of the light, the pillar of fire at night, and the pillar of cloud during the day (Ex 13:22) guiding the chosen people in their journey to the Promised Land. God handed His commandments at Mount Sinai amidst thunder and lightning as the Lord *came down on it in fire* (Ex 19:16, 17). God makes Himself felt in the Tent of the Lord's presence in dazzling light and thick clouds (Ex 4:34-38).

Man's total dependence on God's never-failing protection in one's darkest moments is much evident in the prayers: *The Lord will be my everlasting light* (Is 60:19), *The Lord is my Shepherd, even though I walk in darkness, I fear no evil for [He] is with me* (Ps 23:1,4). The Psalmist said: *The Lord is my light and my salvation* (Ps 27:1) and in *[His] light we see light* (Ps 36:9).

The book of Proverbs, likewise said: *The road the righteous travel is like the light, getting brighter and brighter until the daylight has come* (Pr 4:18), while Isaiah prophesied that: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. They live in the land of shadows, but now light is shining on them* (Is 9:2). For the people of God, light is the symbol of hope and redemption associated with His power to save. But to be saved, they have to see the light and walk in the path of God's light.

Salvation is God's way of rendering His people help or protection. And so, He is the acknowledged Protector and Liberator of His people Israel from their enemies and kept them safe (2 Sam 22:2-4). In the eyes of an Israelite, God preserves the life of his people preventing them from extinction and saving them from their enemies and from all their persecutors. It is affirmed explicitly that *God [Yahweh] alone saves* (Ho 13:4); and that the *safety of Israel is Yahweh's concern* (Jer 3:23); and, *Yahweh saves his people from their foes* (Ps 18:47; 25:5; 27:9; Is 17:10).²¹

The will of God to save hinges from the covenant relationship: *I will be your God and you will be my people* (Gen 17:7), but with conditions required from the people such as obedience to His laws, repentance from sins and righteousness. He made a solemn promise: *I will make your enemies your footstool* (Ps 110:1). True enough, the Israelites were always at war with their neighbors and were always persecuted by their enemies. In times of persecution and bondage they seek for deliverance and implore God's power to save. God does save, but He also raises men to be saviors and empowers them to save their fellow Israelites. He sent liberators like Moses, Aaron, Joshua, the Judges like Gideon and Samson, Kings like David and Solomon, and the Prophets like Samuel, Isaiah, Elijah, among others.

²¹ John McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Salvation," New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1965.

God's most remarkable divine intervention for the Israelites was their liberation from Egypt, perpetuated by the cherished national celebration of the Passover Meal (Ex 12:1-28). God saved His people from the bondage of slavery and brought them back to the Promised Land—the *land flowing with milk and honey* (Ex 3:8), and *the land of their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* (Ex 3:6). Later, the longing for salvation was deepened and expanded during the exile in Babylon: *By the river of Babylon, we sat down and wept remembering Zion* (Ps 137:1).²² It is in times of adversity that the chosen people of God long for a Redeemer to liberate them from bondage and the messianic hope is ever revived.

Moreover, God made use of **women** in the Old Testament who prefigured the Messiah in their heroic acts of saving the people of Israel and displayed exemplary courage to face adversity, such as, Rahab, the prostitute; Deborah, the prophetess; Esther, the Queen; Ruth, the foreigner; Susana, the God-fearing woman who stood against the evil intentions of men; Bathsheba, the mother of King Solomon, among others. In these heroic women, Mary is the prefigured *ancilla Domini*, the handmaid of the Lord destined to fulfill a noble task for the Lord, that is, to be the Mother of the incarnate Son of God, the Light and Savior of the world.

New Testament: God is light. In him there is no darkness (1 Jn 1:5)

At the dawn of salvation, the angel of God revealed unto Mary that the baby she will conceive will be named Jesus from Hebrew and Aramaic **Jesu'a or Yehosu'a**, meaning, *Yahweh is salvation*,²³ for He will save mankind from sin (Mt 1:21). God allowed His Son to be born in a manger in the silence of the night, but it was by a bright light of a star that revealed the birth of the Messiah, followed by the Magi from the east who paid Him homage (Mt 2:2). It was the much-awaited moment for Simeon *to see the light and salvation for all nations* (Lk 2:29-32). But the Savior Himself had to be saved by His mother Mary under the protective care of Joseph from the murderous intentions of Herod, when they brought Him to safety in Egypt (Mt. 2: 13-15) escaping the massacre of innocent infants in Bethlehem (Mt 2:16).

In His public ministry, Jesus taught the lessons about light: *You are the light of the world* and He encourages that light should be shared and not be hidden (Mt 5: 14-15). He associates light with righteousness, so that He encouraged His disciples to follow the light: *Walk while you still have the light, the one who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. While you have the light, keep faith in the light, thus you will become sons of light* (Jn 12: 34-6). He also warns about the widespread influence of darkness and evil: *Light came into the world but, men love darkness rather than light*.

²² See, Ibid., s.v. "Salvation."

²³ See, Ibid., s.v. "Jesus Christ."

And that light is the banner of truth: *everyone who practices evil hates the light, he does not come near it for fear his deeds will be exposed. But he who acts in the truth comes into the light* (Jn 3:20-21)

Jesus revealed His divinity in the mysteries of the Light: at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan, in the wedding feast at Cana, in His public ministry where He proclaimed God's kingdom. But divine revelation *par excellence* is the Transfiguration, when the face of Christ *shone like the sun* (Mt. 17:2) "in which the three Apostles Peter, James, and John appear entranced by the beauty of the Redeemer."²⁴ The disciples saw the vision of Christ's glory in the splendor of light as the Son of the Father, whose voice was heard while talking with the Major Prophets Elijah and Moses.

Before His passion and death, He instituted the wondrous sacraments of Priesthood and the Eucharist in His last supper together with the Apostles, and gave a new command: *To love one another as I have loved you*, and that, *There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends!* (Jn 15:13). These two sacraments are closely linked together and instituted at the same time as a memorial and reminder of the continuing presence of the salvific actions of Christ based on love and sacrifice.

In the morning of Easter, He revealed His divinity in the radiant splendor of the resurrection (Mt 28:3) by conquering death, and on the day of Pentecost, the apostles became witnesses to the outpouring of fire of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14)²⁵ that gave birth to the Church and inspired the apostles to give witness to their Savior. Christ revealed Himself in a blinding light that struck down Saul on the way to Damascus that led to his conversion: *I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting* (Acts 9:3-5). For this, St. Paul gives thanks to God for the gift of salvation and the light in Christ: *Let us give thanks to the Father for having made you worthy to share the lot of the saints in light. He rescued us from darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Through Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins* (Col 1:12-14).

Christ, our Light and our Salvation

The Psalmist is very explicit in encouraging trust and confidence in God's unfailing light and salvation—the light that protects and saves, the light that guides and directs and dispels darkness. Basically, the theology of light and salvation is anchored in the trust and confidence of a mortal being to God who is all-powerful and in control of everything: *If God is with us, who can be against us?* (Rom 8:31). Light is always in contrast with darkness that allegorically refers to the battle between

²⁴ JP II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (RVM), no. 9.

²⁵ See, *Ibid.*, no. 10.

good and evil. Those who trust in God always long for deliverance as they are in constant threat from the snares of their enemies and the onslaught of the evil one. As always, God prevails, as light always prevails over darkness, and goodness over evil. To fulfill the fullness of redemption, God sent the Light to the world. St. John the Baptist introduced Christ into the world: *The real light which gives light to every man is coming. It is the light that shines on in darkness, a light that darkness did not overcome* (Jn 1:5-9).

Then finally, Jesus spoke reassuringly: *I am the light of the world, no follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life* (Jn 8:12). Jesus equates light with goodness, since goodness is God and God Himself is the *Summum Bonum*, the Absolute Good. Therefore, he who walks in the light walks with God and with Jesus as his light.

In the tradition of the Church, the presentation of the Lord in the Temple²⁶ is the manifestation of God's redeeming light, Jesus, whom the old Simeon called *a light of salvation for all the nations and the glory of the people of Israel* (Lk 2:30-32). In the homily of St. Sophronius, he said:

Our lighted candles are a sign of the divine splendor of the one who comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole universe radiant with the brilliance of his eternal light. Our candles also show how bright our souls should be when we go to meet Christ.²⁷

Light symbolizes the majestic power and splendor of God, and His protective presence among men. Light saves from peril, directs the steps, leads to the right path and true happiness; light reveals the truth. Jesus gives light by His words and deeds; His illuminating functions come from what He is Himself, the light of men, the true light that enlightens every person (Jn 1:4, 9). Jesus shows Himself as the light by giving sight to the blind beggar Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52) and the man born blind (Jn 9:1-40). More than giving them physical sight, Jesus leads them to spiritual insight about Him—that He is a prophet and the He is from God. For these blind men, Jesus is truly “his light and salvation.” The High Priests threw the man born blind out of the synagogue because he holds on to his belief, but he is the one who clearly sees and is justified.²⁸

²⁶ This Feast is celebrated on February 2, popularly known as *Candlemas* or *Candelaria*; in the Eastern Churches it is known as the “Encounter,” where the solemn blessing and procession of candles are held. This feast signifies the going forth of the faithful as they hasten to meet the Lord as He comes, acclaiming Him as what the old Simeon said: *The light [God] revealed to the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel*.

²⁷ From a sermon by St. Sophronius, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, “The Presentation of the Lord,” Vol. III, p. 1350.

²⁸ See, *365 Days with the Lord 2010*, St. Paul's Philippines, Makati—published by Manila Bulletin, March 22, 2010, p. B-9.

On the other hand, darkness is always associated with vicious life and evil deeds—*Take no part in vain deeds done in darkness* (Eph 5:11) and *sleepers sleep by night and drunkards drink by night* (1 Th 5:4-7). Darkness is also associated with hell, despair and hopelessness—*where there is wailing and grinding of teeth* (Mt 8:12); with untruth, ignorance, and aimlessness—*the man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going* (Jn 12:35). Evil deeds are made under the cover of darkness and those who love darkness hate the light. The power of Satan impels those who love to stay in the dark to perpetuate his evil intents, but he who lives in virtuous ways need not fear that his good deeds be made known in the light: *Everyone who practices evil hates the light; he does not come near it for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who acts in the truth comes into the light, to make clear that his deeds are done in God* (Jn 3:20-21). During the Last Supper, Jesus announced to His disciples: *One of you is going to betray me* (Jn 13:21). Then He said to Judas: *Be quick about what you are to do!* Judas went out it was **night**. (Jn 13:27, 30)

On the other hand, light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth and so we have to live as children of the light (Eph 5:8-9). Time and again, Jesus has always instructed His disciples about the importance of the light—the righteous man always walks in the light and he is a child of the light: *The light is among you only a little longer. Walk while you still have it or darkness will come over you...While you have the light, keep the faith in the light, thus you will become sons of light* (Jn 12:35-36). And St. Paul reminds every follower of Christ, that: *There was a time that you were in darkness, but now you are the light in the Lord. Well then, live as children of the light. Light produces every kind of goodness and justice and truth* (Eph 5:8-9). And so reborn in Christ and righteousness, he encouraged them: *Let us cast off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us live honorably as in daylight* (Rom 13:12-13).

Finally, Christ as the hope of salvation is symbolically referred to as the rising sun that brings the first light of day, the Sun of justice, and Christians are encouraged to be watchful or vigilant: *Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light* (Eph 5:14). The light and salvation that Christ brought to the world is shared by His Mother “flowing from the superabundance of His merits,”²⁹ because everything that Mary brings to her children comes from her Son, the font of all graces. Mary is the channel of graces that comes from the main source, the wellspring of graces, Christ her Son. Mary is the Moon that shares her light from the Sun.

²⁹ LG, no. 60.

Mary as Salvación in Sacred Scriptures

Mary, the Mother of God, actually did perform some great saving actions out of her total self-giving and her generous commitment to love, to serve, to protect, and to intercede for those people who are dear to her. It can be recalled that in her earthly life, she assumed the role as *Salvación* when she herself responded to the call of duty “to save” in given situations:

- a. Moved with charity, Mary showed her willingness and voluntarily rendered service and assistance to her cousin Elizabeth who was on the last months of her conception. She was her succor in time of need and stayed with her “for about three months” (Lk 1:56). The service she rendered to Elizabeth was a sensible initiative to assist her before, during and after her childbirth knowing that she herself will soon be a mother.
- b. Mary was the *Salvación* of the Savior of the world when He was in imminent danger. King Herod intended to destroy the child and slaughtered innocent children. The Holy Family, under the protective care of Joseph, escaped from Bethlehem to Egypt and brought the child Jesus to safety (Mt 2:13-18).
- c. Mary nursed and nurtured under her motherly and protective care the child Jesus and *kept all things in memory as he grew steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men* (Lk 2:51-52).
- d. Mary was responsible for the first miracle of Jesus at Cana. As intermediary, she was the *Salvación* for the couple at the wedding feast when she saved them from embarrassment by whispering to her Son: *They had no more wine!* and instructed the waiters: *Do whatever he tells you* (Jn 2:3-5). Mary’s role therefore, as *Salvación* was mediatory, as she acted only on behalf of men. *My hour has not yet come* (Jn 2:4), said the Lord; the “hour” refers to the completion of universal salvation, but with Mary’s intercession, Jesus went out of His way to fulfill His Mother’s request.

In the Book of Revelation, it is recorded that she is the *Salvación* of the Savior-child from the Dragon and brought him to a secured place (Rev 12:1-14). This act of saving her Son from the evil one is extended to all her children in the Church who have recourse to her when they implore: *Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy...to you we cry poor banished children of Eve; to you we send up our sighs morning and weeping in this valley of tears...Turn then, most gracious Advocate, your eyes of mercy towards us!*

*Images of Mary in the Work of Salvation*³⁰

As one woman was instrumental for the fall of man, God in His infinite goodness offered a promise of redemption with an image of another woman and “her seed” (Gen 1: 15). The works of the devil lured the woman to disobey God, but God “conquered the devil using the same means and weapons that the devil used to win” (St. John Chrysostom). He sent His message to a woman through an angel to fulfill His promise—the *proto-evangelium*. The woman Eve gave in to the enticing invitation of the Devil to fall into sin, while the other woman Mary received generously the invitation of God through an Angel. While Eve disobeyed God, Mary countered with her *fiat* to seal her obedience and complete submission to the will of God. St. Paul proclaims the mystery of the Incarnation as the fulfillment of the God’s promise in his letter to the Galatians: *When the appointed time had come, God sent forth his Son born of a woman, born under the law, to deliver from the law those who were subjected to it, so that we may receive our status as adopted sons* (Gal 4:4-5). The *proto-evangelium* therefore, brings to us two images that prefigured Mary:

- a. The image of a **Woman with child** (Mt 1:18)—Joseph found out that Mary was **with child** (Mt 1:18). This is the image of Mary who conceived the child in her womb and that, the “seed” in her womb is by divine intervention: *It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child* (Mt 1:20). Mary wondered about the extra-ordinary news: *How can this be since I am a virgin?* The angel answered her: *The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence, the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God* (Lk 1:34-35). Elizabeth acknowledged Mary’s conception with the greeting: *Blessed is the fruit of your womb!* (Lk 1:42). In these passages, we see the power of God working beyond the natural order bringing His redemptive work into completion in the humanity of Mary, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: *The virgin shall conceive and bear a son* (Is 17:14). Ultimately, this image of Mary with child refers back to the mystery of the Incarnation, when Christ “came down from heaven to earth, clothed himself in that humanity in the Virgin’s womb, and was born a man.”³¹
- b. The image of the **Madonna and Child** (Mt 2:10) when, *She gave birth to her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger* (Lk 2:7); when the Magi entered the house, **they found the child**

³⁰ In earlier times, the Fathers of the Church had already referred to Mary as *Salvación*, namely, Severian of Gabala (d. after 408) who named Mary as the “Mother of salvation,” and Theodotus of Ancyra (d. 446) who called Mary as the “Mother of the economy of salvation.” See, Buono, p. 115.

³¹ From an Easter homily of St. Melito of Sardis, *Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. II, p. 458.

with Mary, his mother (Mt 2:10); when, *She brought him up to Jerusalem so that he could be presented to the Lord* (Lk 2:22); and when *Joseph got up and took the child and his mother to Egypt* (Mt 2:14). In these passages, we see the image of the Virgin Mary as a mother, the progenitor of the Savior, and fulfilling her delicate role to nurture her child—to love and protect him with her maternal love. This is the image of the Blessed Mother with the baby Jesus nestled in her bosom, carrying Him in her loving embrace, and presenting Him to the world.

The **Woman with child** is understood to be *the Virgin who conceived* that Isaiah prophesied (Is 17:14) and the *Woman clothed with the sun* (Rev 12:1-2) who eventually gave birth to a boy *destined to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod* (Rev 12:5), and will crush the head of the Serpent, the Devil.³² The **Madonna and Child** is the image of Mary carrying the child Jesus in her bosom that is the favorite theme in Christian art and iconography, because she embodies the purest form of unconditional love and is perceived as the compassionate and loving mother of humanity.³³ The first image refers to Mary as the **THEOTOKOS**, the “bearer of God”—her womb was the “Sacred Vessel” of the *Word made flesh* (Jn 1:14). The title “Mother Mary” is always understood as her role as the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of God, but her maternal love extends to all people of God, which makes her the Mother of the Church (*Mater Ecclesiae*). Mary’s role is to bring her Son into the incarnate world and introduce Him as the true Savior and Light of the world, thus earning her the title in the Eastern tradition **HODEGETRIA**, the “Lady who shows the Way.” St. Sophronius projects this role of Mary as the “bearer of light” in one of his homilies:

The Mother of God, the most pure Virgin, carried the true light in her arms and brought Him to those who lay in darkness. We too should carry a light for all to see and reflect the radiance of the true light as we hasten to meet Him.³⁴

In line with the foregoing, there are actually two promises in the *proto-evangelium*: 1) the promise of the **Messiah**, the “seed” or the offspring, and 2) the promise of the **Woman** who would bear the Messiah, the *fruit of her womb* (Lk 1:42). The world anticipated both the coming of the Messiah and the Woman who would bring forth and show Him to the world. In the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pius IX said

³² It is the image of Mary on the family way, bearing the child Jesus in her womb is portrayed in the Miraculous Medal in the vision of St. Catherine Labouré (1806–1876). Mary is standing upon a globe, crushing the head of a serpent beneath her feet to show her dominance over Satan and all his followers (Gn 3:15). She stands upon the globe, as the Queen of Heaven and Earth.

³³ Kyra Belan, *The Virgin in Art*, New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005, p. 7.

³⁴ From a sermon by St. Sophronius, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, “The Presentation of the Lord,” Vol. III, p. 1350.

that the *proto-evangelium* in the context of the Genesis, *I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed*, is all about the divine prophecy foretold about the Redeemer of mankind, Jesus Christ, and that the Virgin Mary was prophetically pointed out as most closely united to Christ “with Him and through Him, eternally at enmity with the evil serpent, and most completely triumphed over him and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot.”³⁵ *Lumen Gentium* further supports this declaration saying: “Mary is already prophetically foreshadowed in that victory over the serpent which was promised to our first parents after their fall into sin.”³⁶ The graphic presentations of the foregoing are the following images that are popular icons in Eastern (Byzantine) religious art:³⁷

1. **Mary, the Theotokos, the Woman with Child:** The Council of Ephesus (431) declared Mary as the *Theotokos* (“Bearer of God”). When she conceived Him, her womb was the sacred “shelter” of the Son of God for nine months: “It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance.”³⁸ For nine months, the womb of Mary is the “sanctuary” that became the secured abode of the Son of God in its embryonic form going into the world. It is the Word that developed its physical form in Mary’s womb *by the power of the Holy Spirit* (Mt 1:20) to dwell in the world to be among men (Jn 1:14), and shared in her humanity. The womb of Mary is blessed precisely because of *the fruit of her womb Jesus* (Lk 1:42); the God who blesses all things blest her womb most extra-ordinarily to be the sacred vessel, the “Ark of the Covenant,” the “Holy of holies” and the Tabernacle that carried God. The modern image of the *Theotokos* is the image of Mary with child in the Miraculous Medal with the serpent trampled down on her feet.
2. **Mary, the Hodegetria,³⁹ the Madonna and Child:** Mary is *Hodegetria*, because she is the “Lady who shows the Way.” Once Mary brought forth her Son into the world, she became the woman who introduced to humanity the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the woman who

³⁵ Michael O’Carroll, CSSp, *THEOTOKOS*, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1985, s.v. “Woman in Genesis 3:15,” p. 370-372.

³⁶ *LG* no. 55.

³⁷ These icons of the Blessed Mother had been prominently mentioned by John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 33 to illustrate her being represented in a number of ways, as the this tradition has long been maintained in the East and West since the well-known Iconoclasm controversy about the cult of sacred images was put to an end by Nicea II in 787.

³⁸ *RVM*, no. 10.

³⁹ See, Alfredo Tradigo, Stephen Sartarelli (trans.) *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006, p. 169-171. Note: This icon in the Eastern Orthodox Church shows Mary holding the child Jesus in her left arm while her right hand is raised pointing at Him. Her eyes are fixed on the viewer as if saying: *Behold my Son!*

presented the Light of the world. Re-echoing St. Sophronius' words: "The Mother of God, the most pure Virgin, carried the true light in her arms and brought him to those who lay in darkness."⁴⁰ In doing this, she plays an intermediary between the world and her Son by showing her children the way that leads to Him. Mary is truly the *Hodegetria* because with her generous response to God's invitation, she prepared the way for the salvation of men and brought the Savior to the world. Mary's defining moments as *Hodegetria*, were when she presented the child Jesus to the shepherds and the Magi, and when she and Joseph presented the child Jesus at the Temple, to the delight of the old Simeon: *My eyes have seen the salvation, and light of all nations and the glory of Israel* (Lk 2:20-22). In return, as He was hanging on the cross, Jesus entrusted Mary St. John and to the world: *Behold your mother!* (Jn 19:26-27). In like manner, as *Hodegetria*, Mary would always say: *Behold my Son! 'He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Light of the world!'* (Jn 14:4). As *Hodegetria*, Mary is the wise mother and teacher—*Mater et Magistra*. She shows the right way to her children so that they may not go astray; she guides them to the Way that leads to her Son.

3. ***Mary, the Panagia (All Holy), the Virgin of the Sign:***⁴¹ *The virgin shall conceive and bear a son* (Is 17:14). In the Eastern Byzantine tradition Mary is portrayed as a woman standing with arms raised and the palms of her hands turned heavenward, and over her heart appears the image of her Son Jesus. This image is also called *Orans* or *Orant* (from *orare*, "to pray"). The gesture of Mary represents her complete submission to the will of God to be the Mother of God in her famous *Fiat!*—*Let it be done to me according to your word* (Lk 1:39), at the same time, it is a gesture of welcoming her children as she embraces all Christians in her maternal love. Moreover, with her gesture of praying, she invites all her children to pray to her Son and invoke His name. Mary, as a prayerful mother encourages her children the same habit of prayer to her Son: *to do whatever He tells you to do* (Jn 2:5).
4. ***Mary, the Eleóusa, the Mother of Tenderness:***⁴² Mary is the picture of a tender-loving mother, *ELEÓUSA* ("Mother of Tenderness"). With Jesus her Son in her bosom, she shows the world the intensity of the loving and affectionate relationship between her and the child Jesus. Mary

⁴⁰ From the sermon of St. Sophronius, "Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, February 2," *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. III, p. 1350, New York: Catholic Book Publishing, Co., 1975.

⁴¹ See, Tradigo., pp. 172-174.

⁴² See, Ibid., pp. 177-179.

embraces her Son closest to her and their cheeks touching together. The gentleness of Mary as a mother to her Son is extended to all her children in the Christian Church. She never lets her children go disappointed nor go empty-handed. The child feels secure in the warmth of his mother's embrace and the comfort of her tender-loving care. As Mary wrapped her baby Jesus in *swaddling clothes* (Lk 2:7), she embraces of all her children and nurtures them in the mantle of her maternal love.

5. **Mary, the Mother of the Passion (Perpetual Help):**⁴³ Mary is the refuge of all who are in need and of those in trouble. This icon represents the young Jesus who, out of His human sensitivity, sought refuge in her comforting arms when confronted with the images of the Passion: the Cross, the nails, the crown of thorns, and the lance. In an apocryphal story, the archangels Michael and Gabriel showed Him the signs of His impending Passion and Death. Afraid of the signs of the Passion, the child Jesus took refuge in the loving and comforting arms of His Mother, hence the title. In like manner, Christians take refuge in the motherly care of Mary and seek her compassion. With the development of the devotion, from the title **Mother of the Passion**, Mary becomes the **Mother of Compassion**. Those who sought her Son's merciful love and compassionate Heart recognize her as the **Mother of Perpetual Help**. One of the oldest prayers of the Church to Mary that manifests every Christian's longing for her motherly protection is, the *Sub tuum presidium* (*We fly to your patronage*) and the *Salve, Regina* (*Hail, Holy Queen*) which are both prayed interchangeably after the recitation of the Rosary.

In the Eastern Church, these images were especially represented through sacred icons as the Mother of God is popularly venerated as early as the second and third centuries, which serves as the stronger link between the Latin and Orthodox Churches. John Paul II once said:

"Among our divided brethren, many honor and celebrate Mary as the Mother of the Lord, especially among the Orientals. It is a Marian light cast upon ecumenism." Both Orthodox and Catholics "with ardent emotion and devout mind concur in reverencing the Mother of God, ever Virgin... we can say that in the presence of the Mother of Christ, we feel that we are true brothers and sisters within the messianic people, which is called to be the one family of God on earth."⁴⁴

In these images, Mary as one figure of the *proto-evangelium* after the Fall,

⁴³ See, Ibid., pp. 188-189.

⁴⁴ *RMat*, no. 50.

is well represented and portrayed as the Mother of the God-man Jesus Christ that cover a vast theological and doctrinal significance. The Incarnation of the Son of God that has taken shape in the womb of Mary is the ultimate *evangelium*, the “good news” for the whole humanity in the truest sense of the word that God announced through an angel (Lk 1:26).⁴⁵ Again, St. Sophronius said regarding Mary’s salvific role: “Truly, Mary is blessed among women, because, through her, her forebears have found salvation. For, she gave birth to the Savior who was to win them salvation.”⁴⁶

While Mary brought the Light into the world, John the Baptist, the precursor, and the forerunner of the Lord, likewise, gave witness to the true Light through his preaching. In line with this, John the Evangelist referring to John the Baptist said: *So that through him all men might believe—but only to testify to the light, for he himself was not the light. The real light which gives light to every man was coming into the world* (Jn 1:6-9).

Light in the Liturgy

The theological significance of the light is best dramatized in the Easter Vigil on the eve of Easter Sunday, considered as the greatest and noblest of all solemnities celebrated. In this Liturgical celebration, Christ’s victory over sin, death, and darkness is recalled:

*In this most holy night when Christ passed over from death to life, the Church invites her children throughout the world to come together in vigil and prayer as it honors the memory of His death and resurrection, to share His victory over death and live with Him forever in God.*⁴⁷

The message of the Easter Vigil is summarized in the words of St. Paul: *Live as children of the light* (Eph 5:8), following the words of Jesus: *While you have the light, keep faith in the light, thus you will become sons of light* (Jn 12: 36).⁴⁸ The entire celebration takes place at night and is encouraged to end before daybreak to give more significance to the theological meaning of the light in contrast with darkness. It begins with the Blessing of the Fire and the Preparation of the Paschal Candle that would be proclaimed as *Lumen Christi* (“Light of Christ”) with a prayer: *May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds!* Then, the singing of the *Exultet* (“Rejoice!”) proclaims “an end to gloom and darkness” as it

⁴⁵ See, David Noel Freedman, Editor, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Michigan: William Eerdsman Publishing Co., 2000, s.v. “Evangelist.”

⁴⁶ From a sermon by St. Sophronius, *Liturgy of the Hours, Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, p. 1926, Vol. II.

⁴⁷ See, *Vatican II Sunday Missal*, The Easter Vigil Rite, Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1975.

⁴⁸ See, *Ibid.*

recalls the different “nights” in salvation history that reveal the saving power of God. It also recalls the “happy fault” that brings about the glorious Redeemer that “dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores the innocence to the fallen, and joy to the mourners.” It concludes that as Christ came back from death’s domain, “He shed his peaceful light on humanity, and lives and reigns forever and ever.”⁴⁹ Jesus is the Easter light that once and for all dispelled the darkness of sin and death: *O death where is your victory; where is your sting? The sting of death is sin* (1 Cor 15:55). He emerged victorious against the power of Satan: “By his death, Jesus had crushed and triumphed over the iron-clad law of death, eliminated its poisonous root forever.”⁵⁰ By the wounds of Christ, we were healed, and by His death, we live in accord of God’s will (1 Pt 2:24). By the rising of Jesus from the dead, the Church teaches that we become children of the light:

He has made us children of the light, rising to new and everlasting light. He has opened the gates of heaven to receive His faithful people. His death is our ransom from death; His resurrection is our rising to new life.⁵¹

Not far from the celebration of the Easter Vigil is the image of Mary waiting for the light of the Resurrection. The Sorrowful Mother (*Mater Dolorosa*) is the image of the wise Virgin who kept vigil and patiently waited for the Master’s return (Mt 25:2-4). She anticipated Her Son’s return from the dead, so that while the world laid in darkness, she kept her light burning. The Son of God has risen from the dead in the same manner that He was born in the darkness of the night in a most inconspicuous place away from the attention of the world and only a chosen few were privileged to be witnesses.

Before the break of dawn, Mary was first to meet the Resurrected Christ as dramatized in the traditional *Encuentro* or *Salubong*. Although, this traditional pre-dawn encounter between the Risen Christ and the Sorrowful Mother is not mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, it is presumed that this happened before Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John came to the empty tomb (Jn 20:1-10). St. John Paul II gave a catechesis on this meeting when he said:

The Blessed Virgin, who was present at Calvary and at the Cenacle, was probably also a privileged witness to the Resurrection of Christ, in this way completing her participation in all the essential moments of the paschal mystery. Embracing the risen Jesus, Mary is, in addition, a sign

⁴⁹ See, Rev. James Socias (Publisher), *Daily Roman Missal*, “The Liturgy of Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord,” Woodridge, Illinois: Midwest Theological Forum, 2010.

⁵⁰ Bishop Nereo P. Odchimar, DD, “Conquering power of death,” *Manila Bulletin*, Easter Sunday, April, 4, 2010, pp. 1, 8.

⁵¹ See, *Vatican II Weekday Missal*, Prefaces-Easter II, p. 885.

and anticipation of humanity, which hopes to reach its fulfillment in the resurrection of the dead.⁵²

Mary, as the Mother of the Light and Salvation of the world that was formally announced by the angel Gabriel, is perpetuated in one of the beautiful Marian prayers, the *Angelus* which calls to mind the Incarnation of the Son of God. In the same way, her participative role runs through the different mysteries of the Rosary: the Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous, and Glorious mysteries, the object of meditation on the sacred mysteries of the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Nevertheless, after going through the sorrows of the passion and death of Christ, her sorrows were turned into the joys of Easter, which is gloriously acclaimed by the Easter Angelus, *Regina Coeli*:

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, Alleluia!
For whom you did merit to bear, Alleluia!
Has risen as He said, Alleluia!
Pray for us to God, Alleluia!
Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, Alleluia!
For the Lord is truly risen, Alleluia! **PS**

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⁵² Pope John Paul II, General Audience at St. Peters Square, May 21, 1997, catholic-pages.com/bvm/resurrection.asp.

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