

# Reflections

Volume 98

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*Catholic Family Newsletter*

**September 2023**

**Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness**

**Replacing God with TikTok and iPhones**

**The Saints Who Levitated**

**The Biblical Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus**

**Bible Verse for the Day:** Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37

**Thought for the Day:** Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character for it will become your destiny. ( Hippocrates, The father of medicine 460BC-370 BC)

**What to Prayer for Today:** *Prayer of St. Gertrude: Releasing Souls from Purgatory*

Eternal Father, I offer You the most Precious Blood of Your Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the Universal Church, those in my own home, and within my family. Amen.

*When St. Gertrude made a prayerful offering of her Communion, she was amazed at the great number of souls in purgatory helped as a result. Please offer this prayer daily to share in the purpose of the Holy Souls Sodality.*



### **The iPhone Family**

#### **Blessing to All:**

By: Richard Pickard

### **Christian Families**

What examples do you give to your family each day? Think about this. Your daily examples take root in the family members and influence them for the rest of their lives.

Is your example one of hope, forgiveness, listening to their problems and showing your Christian faith all through the day? Or is your example the opposite? One of brooding, unforgiveness, no hope and turning away from them to watch TV or looking at your cell phone when they are talking to you.

How often we see at dinner tables or restaurants, the family not being a family. They are slaves to the iPad or iPhone. Family conversation, so essential to uniting the family, is being avoided. The family is under attack by the very things we think are important. **But the family is the important unit that we must nurture.** Put away those devices when the family is together. Talk to each other. Go outside and do things under God's skies.

These are times when your children are young, to instill in them the value of family love and togetherness. Teach them about daily prayer, and the value

of going to Church each Sunday. Teach them to stay away from bad company and **tell them why.**



In many countries we see what happens when the family is not being looked after. Children turn to electronic devices and become addicted to these devices. TikTok has over 843 million on TikTok worldwide with 278 million under the age of 14. One major concern about TikTok is that it recommends videos for kids that can be extreme, provocative, and even toxic. TikTok loophole sees users post pornographic and violent videos. Satan uses any social means necessary to darken the mind and souls of our children. Do your 14-year-old children have this app? Some videos can be mentally and physically harmful to children. Clinical Psychologist Dr. Alan Blotchy writing in a *Psychiatric Times* article notes the following.

*<sup>1</sup>Such content can exacerbate a mental health problem for a child or teenager. If, for example, a child is struggling with suicidal ideation, it would be harmful to be presented with video clips that demonstrate suicide or glorify suicidal behavior. [Or] if for example, a teenager is grappling with an eating disorder, it would be harmful to be presented with video clips of self-induced vomiting or unreasonably strict diets. In a similar vein, There is worry about conversations kids have on TikTok about their mental health concerns or problems. Kids with depression, for example, may be confronted with dismissive or sarcastic comments from others. They may be bullied or even encouraged to engage in suicidal behavior."*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/tiktok-biggest-concerns-for-children-and-adolescents>

Our children need the words and smiles of the mother and father in their lives to offset the TikTok's and Facebook addictions. We see too many children and parents replacing God in their lives with their *iPhones* and *Tablets*.

A constant feeding of these things impacts the very heart of a person and the family. **We become what we do every day!** Your heart becomes what you think and do each day. Good or evil. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 15:19 **"For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy."** Your children are being subjected to a host of evil on apps for their *iPhones* and *Tablets*.

St. John Paul II knew that the human heart and soul, needs the love of family to be shown to each other every day to combat the evil present in Social Media. **"The world is pulling apart the family, but when the family is rooted in Jesus, the children grow up with peace and happiness in their heart, no matter what circumstances they run into in their lives. The heart of the family starts with parents' examples of the Christian way of living."**

So, put down your *iPhones* when you are at the dinner table with the family or at a restaurant. And don't get glued to the TV when your children are talking to you and need your attention.

### **The Need for Love and Peace of Jesus**

**Pope John Paul II also said...**"It is Jesus you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is

Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.”

Dear brothers and sisters, bad things happen in good families. But when bad things happen, good families handle them in a radically different way than bad families.

<sup>2</sup>They confront it instead of denying it. The temptation when something bad happens is to cover it up. In many families, problems are never discussed, issues are never confronted, and Aunt Edna’s drinking problem or Cousin John’s very public mistake is never discussed. Mention it at Thanksgiving dinner and the entire family glares at you as though you have broken the most sacred of rules.

In good families, issues are discussed. They don’t dominate family outings. They aren’t publicly broadcasted for everyone to hear. But they are confronted. Feelings are expressed. Opinions are heard. Apologies are given. Each family member feels heard and understood about their perspective on the situation. Conversations are needed and issues can be discussed and then put to rest rather than forever lingering.

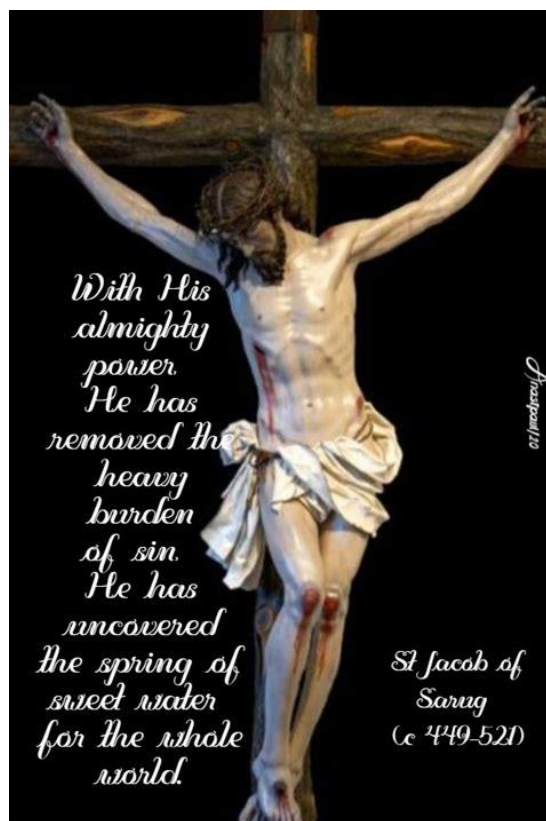
Sometimes the burdens in the family are heart breaking. A divorce, a parent gets laid off work, an adult child rebels, an affair happens, or a family member is addicted to pornography. Whatever the issue, whatever the sin committed, find a resolution and if needed, seek forgiveness and move on and trust Jesus. Jesus has already taken all of these things upon himself. We see in **Isaiah 53:3-6** a clear statement of Jesus and the sins he bore for us.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kevinathompson.com/bad-things-happen-good-families/>

“He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain. Like one from whom you turn your face, spurned, and we held him in no esteem. **Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured.** We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted, **But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, all following our own way; But the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all.**

### The Burden of Sin



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. We have a heavy burden to carry each day but do not be afraid. Each burden and sin we carry has been put on the shoulders of Jesus when he was on the cross. You will not carry your burden and the weight of sin alone. Jesus will help you carry it.

The burden of our sins—the guilt, shame, and regret, the feelings of inadequacy, bondage, hopelessness, and humiliation—often feels less like a few heavy rocks on our back and more like a mountain of boulders that we’ve been buried beneath. As the psalmist illustrates, **“My sins pile**

**up so high I can’t see my way out” (Psalm 40:12).**

Brothers and sisters don’t carry the burdens of sins by yourself anymore. You have Jesus who extends his love to you. Ask him to help you. Don’t live in shame and guilt about your sins. **Ask Jesus to forgive you and be in your life. Start over. Each day start with a conversation with Jesus.**

**Like a friend talking to a friend. Tell him your fears and problems. Ask for his help. Be patience and give the burdens you have and in your family to Jesus. Amen.**

## The Saints Who Levitated: Extraordinary and Concrete Miracles

BY: [ADAM BLAL](#), CATHOLIC EXCHANGE

As with all claims of the miraculous, the Church has been on guard against exaggeration or fabrication. Having direct testimony from the person who levitated, or from those who witnessed the person levitating, is very important — and even then, the Church keenly examines the reliability and motivations of witnesses. An example of this kind of investigation can be found in claims about St. Francis of Assisi.

### St. Teresa of Ávila



There is good reason to believe that St. Teresa of Ávila levitated on a number of occasions. Her levitations were witnessed repeatedly by many people. We also have the saint's own accounts: she described the experience in her auto-biography. Although she preferred not to discuss such matters, she wrote the book under obedience to her

superior. Here she describes how she resisted these raptures that sometimes led to levitation:



These effects are very striking. One of them is the manifestation of the Lord's mighty power: as we are unable to resist His Majesty's will, either in soul or in body, and are not our own masters, we realize that, however irksome this truth may be, there is One stronger than ourselves, and that these favours are bestowed by Him, and that we, of ourselves, can do absolutely nothing. This imprints in us great humility. Indeed, I confess that in me it produced great fear — at first a terrible fear. One sees one's body being lifted up from the ground; and although the spirit draws it after itself, and if no resistance is offered does so very gently, one does not lose consciousness — at least, I myself have had sufficient to enable me to realize that I was being lifted up. The majesty of Him Who can do this is manifested in such a way that the hair stands on end, and there is produced a great fear of offending so great a God, but a fear overpowered by the deepest love, newly enkindled, for One Who, as we see, has so deep a love for so loathsome a worm that He seems not to be satisfied by literally drawing the soul to Himself, but will also have the body, mortal though it is, and befouled as is its clay by all the offenses it has committed. Bishop Diego de Yepes knew her well and wrote one of her many early biographies. One time, after receiving Communion from him through the grille at the convent, she started to rise. The bishop recorded her pleas as she clutched at the bars to stop her ascent:

Lord, for a thing of so little consequence as is my being bereft of this favour of Thine, do not permit a creature so vile as I am to be taken for a holy woman. There are similar anecdotes told by nuns who saw St. Teresa spontaneously levitate. After the events, she would order them to never to speak of it, but later, under obedience to higher authorities during the Church's investigation into her life, they described the incidents. For her part, St. Teresa was greatly embarrassed by her levitations and prayed that they would stop, and by all accounts they decreased greatly in her later life.

### **St. Joseph of Cupertino**



Perhaps the most famous levitating saint is Joseph of Cupertino (1603–1663). Joseph had a very difficult childhood. Today he probably would have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder of some kind. He was apparently not



intelligent and was given the nickname “the open mouth” because he so often stared into space with his mouth agape. Meanwhile, perhaps due to his limitations and others’ response to them, he developed a bad temper. To make matters worse, his father died when Joseph was quite young, and his mother may have been abusive toward him.

Joseph wanted to join the Franciscans, but due to his lack of education, they would not take him. He was then accepted by the Capuchins on a trial basis, but they sent him away after eight months. His mother did not want him back home, so she asked her brother, a Franciscan monk, to take him as a servant at his monastery. Her brother agreed and assigned Joseph to care for livestock. Over time, Joseph’s temper mellowed, and he started doing better with his work — well enough for the Franciscans to allow him to study to become a priest. He was ordained in 1628.

After his ordination, Joseph undertook many penances, including rigorous fasting, usually eating solid food only twice per week. Then he started going into spiritual ecstasies when he said Mass or looked at devotional statues. During these ecstasies, he often levitated a few inches to a few feet off the ground. His levitations were so frequent that people started coming to see him for entertainment; during the investigation of his cause for sainthood, authorities corroborated at least seventy occasions when he levitated in the presence of witnesses.



One notable example happened during a visit to Italy from the Spanish ambassador. The ambassador had visited Joseph in his monastic cell and was so impressed that he wanted to return with his wife. Joseph entered the church where the couple hoped to meet him and, upon seeing a statue of Mary, elevated ten feet into the air, flew over the crowd to the statue, prayed, flew back to the door, and returned home. The Church later took depositions from a number of people who were there that day, and their stories were consistent.

There were many other instances that were investigated in a similar way, including one in front of Pope Urban VIII. It was customary to kiss the pope's feet at the time, as a sign of homage to the Holy Father. When Joseph did so, he rose into the air and was able to come back down only when his superior ordered him to do so. Pope Urban VIII said that if Joseph died during the pope's lifetime, he would testify to the levitation that happened in his presence.

After a time, Joseph's levitations became a problem for the monastery. Some thought the episodes were demonic, and he was denounced for witchcraft and investigated by the Inquisition. They sent him to a monastery in Assisi for observation. He was ordered not to say public Masses and to cease public appearances altogether. But his levitations continued in the monastery, and he was soon relegated to his cell and not even allowed to eat with the other friars. Joseph used this isolation to draw closer to God in prayer. Eventually the inquisition determined that he was not practicing witchcraft and let him return to regular monastic life. Joseph of Cupertino died in 1663 at the age of sixty and was canonized in 1767 by Pope Clement XIII.

### **St. Mary of Jesus Cruci-fied (Mariam Baouardy)**

A more recent example of levitation is St. Mary of Jesus Cruci-fied (1846–1878), who was canonized on May 17, 2015, by Pope Francis. Her life story was covered in the chapter on healings.



On June 22, 1873, the saint was missing at supper, and her fellow nuns went looking for her. They found her balanced on top of a large lime tree, singing. The mistress of novices ordered her to come down without hurting herself, and she complied immediately, lighting touching branches with her feet as she floated gently to the ground. The nuns documented seven more occasions when she levitated. As usual in these cases, some suspected her of trickery, so they spied on and watched her, but no natural explanation could be discovered.

Later a nun testified of the lime-tree incident, "She had taken hold of the tip of a little branch that a bird would have bent; and from there, in an instant, she had been lifted on high." A priest wrote to the local bishop about the levitations:

Sister Mary used to raise herself to the top of the trees by the tips of the branches: she would take her scapular in one hand, and with the other the end of a small branch next to the leaves, and after a few moments she would glide along the outside edge of the tree to its top. Once up there, she would remain holding on to branches normally too weak to bear a person of her weight.

There's a wonderful innocence, even childlikeness, in the stories of Sr. Mary's levitations. She would casually swing from branch to branch, all while singing of God's love. By the end of her life, witnesses reliably attested to eight such episodes, all in the courtyard of her monastery. We can see how a simple, faithful love of God can sometimes cause us to overcome our limitations. Usually this happens interiorly through the conversion of our souls by grace, but sometimes, in extraordinary circumstances, it can happen outwardly through our bodies.

What purpose might God have in causing some ecstasies to levitate during prayer or praise of God? These levitations may prefigure the rising of the living at the second coming of Christ, detailed in 1 Thessalonians:

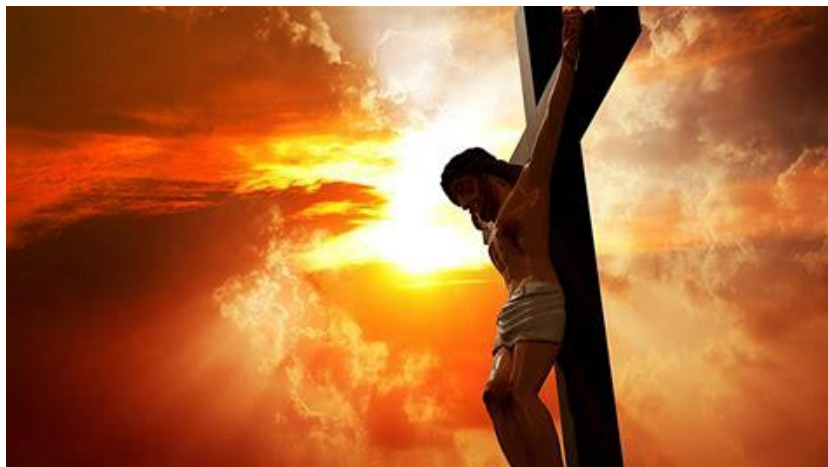
For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus, we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

One could also see levitation as symbolic of rising above the corrupted world, rising above sin when entering a profound contemplation of God that pulls the spirit heavenward. Levitation is a very concrete miracle that serves as a sign of union with God and calls the witnesses to seek the same.

## The Death on the Cross and His Resurrection

Jesus' death on the cross is a historical fact as evidenced by Jewish and Roman historians in their writings of the history of the Jewish and Christian faith. Even the manner of his crucifixion was prophesied by King David in Psalms 22:16-19

"As dry as a potsherd is my throat; My tongue cleaves to my palate; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me; a pack of evildoers closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They stare at me and gloat; they divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots."



The first non-Christian author to mention Jesus is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who wrote a history of Judaism in about the year 93, the famous *Antiquities of the Jews*. In his writings he mentions a number of figures from the New Testament, including Jesus, John the Baptist, and Jesus' "brother" James.

**"There was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not**

forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day (Antiquities 18:3:3)."

### Roman Historian Reflects on Jesus

Scholars point to the Roman historian Tacitus (A.D. 56-120) for confirmation that the crucifixion of Jesus actually took place. Writing in his *Annals*, he records the death of Jesus at the hands of Pontius Pilate:



"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind."

## **The Biblical Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus**

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Christian faith. Without the resurrection, the belief in God's saving grace through Jesus is destroyed. When Jesus rose from the dead, he confirmed his identity as the Son of God and his work of atonement, redemption, reconciliation, and salvation. The Resurrection was a literal, physical raising of Jesus' body from the dead.

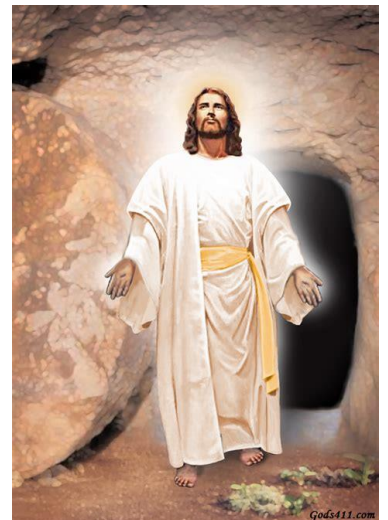
Jesus was arrested, tried, and found guilty of claiming to be a king. His body was hung on a cross between two thieves. After his death, Jesus' body was wrapped in linen cloth and placed in a tomb with a large stone rolled across the opening.

### **The Guard at the Tomb...Matthew 27:62-66**

"The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So, give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first. Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So, they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

### **Jesus Has Risen...Matthew 28:1-10**

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down



from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

So, the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The Old and the New Testaments speak of the truth of Jesus being raised from death - Jesus testified of his resurrection before He died on the cross and his disciples witnessed his body after the resurrection.

Below are the Bible verses and Scriptures that both prophesize the resurrection of Jesus and testify of the reality of the resurrected body of Christ.

### **Old Testament -The Holy One Will Not See Corruption**

"Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoice: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; **neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.** Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:9-11)



### **New Testament Resurrection Scriptures**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead **(1 Peter 1:3)**

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. **(1 Thessalonians 4:14)**

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. **(Romans 8:11)**

Jesus was the Son of God and came to destroy the works of Satan and to save us and give us eternal life. He rose from the dead on the 3rd day and this fact is verified by all the gospels and the historical non-Christians records from both Roman and Jewish historians, rabbinical literature, and anti-Christian commentators who lived during Christianity's earliest days.

### **Do not disbelieve but believe. The doubting Thomas**

When Thomas returned to the house four of his friends said to him, "We have seen the Lord. Thomas! It's all true! He was just with us! Where were you?"

Thomas must have felt a surge of shock, unbelief. Then he felt regret for having left. Then he felt isolated. He was now the only one who hadn't seen Jesus. In self-pity fueled anger he blurted out with more conviction than he felt, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

The following eight days were long and lonely for Thomas. His friends were gracious. No one debated him. It was, in fact, their calm confidence in Jesus' resurrection that aggravated Thomas' growing conviction that he was wrong. Outside he tried to maintain a façade of resolute intellectual skepticism, but

inside he was wrestling and melting and wanting more than anything to see Jesus too.

And then it happened. Thomas was staring at the floor, sinking again under the fear that maybe Jesus had rejected him because of his stubborn unbelief. If so, he knew he deserved it. Then someone gasped. He looked up and his heart leaped into his throat! Jesus was standing across the room looking at him. "Peace be with you" (v. 26).



Thomas could hardly breathe. Jesus spoke to him, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe."

All objections and resistance in Thomas evaporated. And in tears of repentance, relief, and worship Thomas dropped on his knees before Jesus and exclaimed, "My Lord and my God."

All the Apostles died a martyr's death. They truly believed that Jesus was the Messiah and rose from the dead. They saw with their own eyes the resurrected Jesus and went on to preach the good news of the Gospel.



**“I Am Love and Mercy Itself.”**

“O soul steeped in darkness, do not despair. All is not yet lost. Come and confide in your God, who is love and mercy... My child, listen to the voice of your merciful Father”

- Diary 1074, 1486 -

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**It is Better to Light One Little Candle Than to Curse the Darkness**



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**The International Catholic Family Newsletter  
Is Published Monthly at no cost.**

**Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.**



**The Rosary is the 'weapon' for these times. - Padre Pio**

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