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MARY – THE MORNING STAR ANNOUNCING THE DAWN OF RESURRECTION

Abstract. The present article shows in a synthetic form, how Mary lightens up our darkness; in what sense we may call Her the Morning Star announcing the dawn of Resurrection. First of all Her faith is shown that on Good Friday and on Holy Saturday became the faith of the whole arising Church. Until today we have been remembering Mary's faith and we have been learning it from Her every Saturday. But Mary also prepares us for the Messiah's Second Coming and for our Resurrection. As a loving Mother, seeing our sins, She descends to the earth and in Fatima calls us to come to our senses, so that we do not offend God. She again reveals Herself as the Morning Star announcing the Lord's Coming. It is up to each of us if we reply to Her motherly pleas, and if we indicate God's light to other people.

Key words: Mary – the Morning Star, Resurrection, Messiah's Second Coming.

Lord Jesus's Resurrection is the event of supreme importance in the history of the universe. It has given meaning to our human existence. It is the light that radiates the path of our lives.

The symbolism of darkness and light was explicitly present in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. The three hours of the Son of God's agony were accompanied by darkness (even though it took place from noon until three o'clock). On the other hand, the first meetings with the Resurrected occurred on the third day at dawn. The sun that illuminated Easter Sunday is interpreted as the symbol of Christ's victory over satan – the victory of light over the powers of darkness. What also testifies to the victory of light over darkness is the glow of the angel that announced the Lord Jesus's Resurrection to the women: "His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was white as snow" [Mt 28:3]. The first and essential element of the liturgical celebration of Easter Vigil is the Service of Light. The Paschal candle, which symbolises

the Saviour, illuminates the distressing dimness of the night.¹ The light of Christ brings us out from the dark of sin, death and loss, illuminating our path, granting direction and meaning to our lives.

What was most difficult for His disciples during Christ's Passover was not only the moments of His passion and death, but also the period from His death until the moment of Resurrection. It was the hardest trial of faith that was experienced by all who loved Jesus and followed Him. The ancient tradition of the Church stressed that the only person who did not doubt and waited for the miracle of Resurrection with hope on Holy Saturday was the Virgin Mary. She did not rush to the tomb with spices, as other women did, because she believed in the resurrection of Her Son. For this reason, Mary has been our model of unshaken faith and hope in the wait for the miracle of resurrection.² Therefore, not only in the context of Advent, but also of the Resurrection, we are entitled to call Her Morning Star³ – morning brightness that precedes the ultimate victory of the Sun, Jesus Christ. Her faith and hope announce – despite human expectations – the ultimate victory of Christ over Satan, sin and death. Her faith and hope illuminate the darkness of Easter Saturday and foreshadow the full light of Easter Morning.

Hence, in this article we wish to present in what way for us, Christians of the 21st century, Mary is still the Star that announces the final victory of God and His Messiah, Jesus Christ, over Satan, sin and death.

The work will consist of three parts. Firstly, we shall pay attention to the struggle of light and darkness in both the Biblical aspect and the situation of the contemporary world with a special emphasis put on the fact that only the Resurrected Christ may bring the world out of the madness of sin, death and reign of the power of darkness. On the other hand, in the second part, we shall shed light on Mary as the Announcer and Servant of Light – Jesus Christ. The last part will draw attention to the way Mary prepares us today for the final encounter with the Lord Jesus, who is Light from Light, for the moment of our resurrection.

¹ Cf. Edmund Skalski, "Świeca paschalna w liturgii Kościoła," *Anamnesis* 10 (2004), no. 38: 115; *Leksykon liturgii*, ed. Bogusław Nadolski (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2006).

² Cf. Aristide Serra, *Maria di Nazaret. Una fede in cammino* (Milano: Paoline Editoriale Libri, 1993), 38-9.

³ Erich Naab, "Morgenstern," in *Marienlexikon*, ed. Remigius Bäumer, Leo Scheffczyk, vol. 4 (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1992), 517.

1. STRUGGLE OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

The term “light” (in Hebrew “*or*”; in Greek “*phos*”) determines the physical cause thanks to which we are able to see something. Darkness is its opposite, the lack of light, which makes us see nothing.⁴

1.1. Biblical Symbolism of Light and Darkness

The symbolism of light and darkness in Scripture is found repeatedly, already in the first book of the Old Testament, in which separation of light from darkness is God’s first creational act [Gen 1:3f.]. It is reflected in the last book of the New Testament, where God is shown as the light of new creation [Rev 21:23].⁵

Just as it is impossible to live without light on earth – when it comes to either independent live of man (movement, work) or gathering food (plants will not grow without the sun and light), so too it is impossible to live spiritually without the real and only Light – God.

In both the Old and New Testament, God is called light. His revelations are also frequently accompanied by a light not to be found on earth.

However, it is not necessarily the light of “luxes” with which God illuminates human paths, but the light of His truth (*Veritatis splendor*).⁶ He does it, first and foremost, by His commandments and law so that man, holding onto them as a wanderer holds onto a torch or lamp, may happily reach the Father’s House. Christ, who came to save all people, was already called “a light to the nations” [Isa 49:6] in the Old Testament Book of Isaiah. Praising God’s plan of salvation, Zechariah names the announced Messiah “the daybreak from on high [that] will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death’s shadow” [Lk 1:78-79]. In the Gospel of John, Christ calls Himself light of the world [Jn 9:5] and says, “Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” [Jn 8:12]. He later adds, “I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness” [Jn 12:46].

⁴ Cf. Fritz Rienecker, Gerhard Maier, *Leksykon biblijny* (Warszawa: Vocatio, 2001), 796.

⁵ André Feuillet, Pierre Grelot, “Światło i ciemności,” in *Słownik teologii biblijnej*, ed. Xavier Léon-Dufour (Poznań-Warszawa: Pallottinum, 1985), 959.

⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor* (August 6, 1993), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html [November 7, 2016].

During his earthly life, Jesus lifted the veil of His glory and light, in which He dwells as God. It happened at the mountain of the Transfiguration, when “his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light” [Mt 17:2]. The goal of this event was to strengthen the disciples’ faith in His Divinity so that they may persevere the trying times of His passion and death.⁷ The remembrance of Christ’s glory and brightness was to announce the glory and splendour, in which Christ lives after the Resurrection.

The antonym of Light that God is and which illuminates human pilgrimage to the Father’s House is satan. His initial mission was to bring God’s light to other creatures, hence his name “Lucifer” – the “light-bearer.” Rebellious against God, however, the angel of light turned to the angel of darkness. Instead of bearing truth and love, he put the lie, sin, rebellion against God and pride before man. In order to conceal his anti-God work, he has resorted to deceit and lies. He is afraid of the real light – the light of the Truth, remaining the prince of falsehood and darkness.

Tempting people, satan wishes to draw them away from Christ, who is the light. Jesus explicitly expresses it during his conversation with Nicodemus: “And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God” [Jn 3:19-21].

1.2. The Darkness of the Contemporary World

The above quoted words of Jesus, though uttered two thousand years ago, are still relevant. Unfortunately, there is still a mass of people who love darkness more than light, because their deeds are evil. Doing wicked things, they move away from light so that their deeds may not be made known. They fear the truth. They run away from God and turn to satan.

The observation of the modern-day world, even if reduced to information transmitted by the media that reaches us every day, makes it possible to assert how much evil is done in the world. Evil is loud and thus the excess of evil fills us with terror. Observing evil, we notice that people that commit it are stuck in darkness and shadows, because they are far away from God.

⁷ Cf. Józef Kudasiewicz, *Biblijna droga pobożności maryjnej. Z Księdzem profesorem Józefem Kudasiewiczem rozmawia Danuta Mastalska* (Kielce: Jedność, 2002), 206.

Darkness as the Synonym of Human Disorientation

Darkness, which a number of present-day people live in, shows us the state of utter loss of meaning and goal of life. The lack of light leads man to grope, not knowing which direction to follow, what might befall him next. The same is seen on the level of decision making. Relativism – above all ethical and moral relativism – which has launched more and more forceful attacks on societies, is responsible for the lack of clear guidelines of how to live.⁸ State parliaments more often decide, by means of voting, what is to be considered politically correct and unacceptable. The decisions taken, which in fact are binding for whole societies, do not heed God's law and God's commandments whatsoever. Unfortunately, Poland was no exception. State legislation imposed by the Sejm of 2011-2015 and the former president, Bronisław Komorowski, would not only further the anti-Christian gender⁹ ideology and destruction of families, but also committed murders by means of endorsing abortion or IVF. What is imposed on the young generation is the conviction that whatever the majority of the parliaments agrees on is good, which does not refer to the law given by God, either in the form of natural law or the Decalogue. Present-day man then often resembles a blind person, who does not know where to turn to, and follows only those who scream lauder (especially in the media), shirking the responsibility to make use of the mind and evaluate various social pathologies in the light of the law given by the Creator.

Darkness – the Synonym of the State of Sin

Another darkness of the world of today is sin. The aforementioned Jesus's words taken from the conversation with Nicodemus: "For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed" [Jn 3:20] are tragically relevant. Contemporary man, instead of God, puts himself first, glorifies himself¹⁰, making money,

⁸ The source of moral relativism is religious relativism. Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (August 6, 2000), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html [November 7, 2016].

⁹ Cf. Polish Bishops' Conference, *List pasterski na Niedzielę Świętej Rodziny 2013 roku*, <http://episkopat.pl/list-pasterski-na-niedziele-swietej-rodziny-2013-roku/> [November 7, 2016].

¹⁰ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church (October 11, 1993), no. 675: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM [November 7, 2016].

success, fame, hedonistic experience or being in charge his idols. For the sake of these pseudo-values, he is able to do the most evil things. Lest his real intentions be exposed, he runs away from the truth and God's light. He fights against the Church, who calls out his sins. However, he does not find peace, because his conscience keeps reminding him of this sin. What stems from sin is the disintegration of families, wars, open persecution of Christians, exploitation of other people, modern forms of slavery, objectification of people and, above all, lack of care for unborn children and elderly people.

Darkness as a Privileged State of Satan's Attack

The devil is the father of the lie. He never tires of dragging people from God and misguide them into the hold of the sin of darkness.¹¹ His dreamt-of condition and environment is built by the lack of the truth, moral and ethical disorientation, promotion of sin that mankind lives in. He knows that he is going to achieve most if he manages to deprive public life of clear guidelines of God's Law and Gospel, if he rids the Church from the possibility of enlightening the darkness of human existence.

When we look at the vastness of the lie and manipulation that we have dealt with in the recent few years, for instance in the majority of the Polish media, we may be led to believe that satan has once again been able to drown out the glow of the truth, as he did in various totalitarian systems, especially in the era of Nazism and communism. It transpires that the battle with the Church has entered a new, well-organised phase in order to get rid of – or at least downplay as much as possible – the influence of the Church on the present-day people.

1.3. The Resurrected Christ as the Light of the World

The situation we have outlined and experienced should not frighten us, but encourage us to act. In a way, it is strikingly similar to the one from 1917, when St Maximilian, seeing the attack of masonry, founded the *Militia Immaculatae*. Today's attacks has been comparable, though less refined.¹²

¹¹ Ce. Antoni J. Nowak, "Szatan," in *Leksykon duchowości chrześcijańskiej*, ed. Marek Chmielewski (Lublin-Kraków: M, 2002), 849-50.

¹² The difference lies in the fact that masonry celebrated their 200th anniversary then, and in 2017 their 300th anniversary will take place.

Since two thousand years ago the Resurrected Christ has been part of the battle of the power of darkness with God. Through His love, up to the sacrifice of His life two thousand years ago, he won the victory over sin, death and satan, of which we are continually reminded singing a most beautiful song which starts with the words: “The Conqueror of death, hell and satan” (in Polish: “*Zwycięzca śmierci, piekła i szatana*”).¹³

This is the victory, as has already been mentioned in the introduction, which was accompanied by the symbolism of the clash between darkness and light. The night of betrayal and imprisonment of Christ and unusual darkness that coincided with the three-hour-long agony of Christ were – together with the earthquake and tearing down of the veil of the temple in Jerusalem – not only the God-sent signs of the sin of deicide; they may have been received as the sign of satan’s triumph over the Messiah, as well as the truth and love that the Son of God had brought.

It seemed to humans that the triumph of darkness and lies over the light and truth is definitive. This was confirmed by the bribe that the soldiers were given to deny the truth of the Resurrection. However, in spite of the means undertaken, including violence – watchmen at Jesus’s tomb – and propaganda – spreading the lie that it was the disciples who stole Jesus’s body – the Truth and its splendour prevailed.

Christ rises from the dead, emerging victorious over satan, hatred, sin, hell, lie and false propaganda. The splendour of the truth and love that spring from encounters with the Resurrected Jesus overcomes all darkness sown by satan and his servants. The light of the Resurrection brightens the hearts of the fearful Apostles and other disciples of Christ. Fifty days later, the Holy Spirit descends upon them and enables them to proclaim the light of the Truth about the Resurrection, satan’s defeat and our salvation to all nations. Timid and terrified disciples turn to brave preachers of Christ, and most of them confirm their faith and love for the Resurrected with martyrdom.

The history of the Church, initiated by the first communities of Christians, has continued. This constant battle of the power of darkness with God and His disciples is repeated every age. It happened during the persecution of the Church in the period of the Roman Empire and the Barbarian invasions. It recurred by the way of various revolutions – the French and Bolshevik ones, the ones in Mexico, Spain and China. The same situation took

¹³ *Brewiarz franciszkanów świeckich*, ed. Jolanta Bogdanów et al. (Niepokalanów: Wydawnictwo Ojców Franciszkanów, 2011), 803-4.

place when Hitler persecuted the Church¹⁴ and is occurring now, when thousands of Christians die at the hands of jihadists on account of nothing more than being Christ's disciples. Being Christian entails the possibility of martyrdom. In order to be the salt of the earth and light of the world set on a mountain, to which the Lord Jesus Himself calls us, we need courage, uncompromising spirit and readiness to offer oneself up as the greatest sacrifice.

Christ, who is God from God and Light from Light¹⁵, calls us to be like thousands of his disciples, such as St Maximilian, ready to bear Christ's light to all people and be unafraid to go with this light everywhere, proclaiming the Truth of salvation to all – even if we are to pay the highest price for it, as St Maximilian Maria Kolbe did, or blessed fathers Michael Tomaszek and Zbigniew Strzałkowski OFMConv, and as numerous present-day martyrs have done.

2. MARY AS THE ANNOUNCER AND SERVANT OF THE LIGHT – JESUS

By giving birth to the Son of God, Mary brought the Light of the World to us. With all Her mission and life, She has pointed out to the Light, being also the Servant of this Light.

2.1. Mary's Mission in the Mystery of the Incarnation

In the Cantic of Zechariah, we hear that Jesus will come into the world as the daybreak that will shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death [Lk 1:78-79]. In liturgy this symbolism of light has accompanied the celebration of the mystery of the Incarnation. One of the significant elements of Advent is the so-called "Rorate Mass." The symbolism of the candle that is lit during them is profound. Let us focus on three aspects thereof.

First of all, it symbolises waiting for the Lord's coming.¹⁶ It reminds us that whole mankind, generation after generation, awaited the Messiah's

¹⁴ Tomasz Kaczmarek, *Światła w ciemności. Męczennicy 1939-1945* (Włocławek: Wydawnictwo Duszpasterstwa Rolników, 2000).

¹⁵ Cf. the Nicene Creed, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/credo.htm [November 7, 2016].

¹⁶ Cf. "Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return" [Lk 12:35-36].

coming. The light of the candle stands for this wait. It is also the symbol of Mary in a special way. During the Annunciation, She proves Herself to be the Daughter of Zion, representative of the Chosen People and all humanity that awaits and receives the Saviour into their hearts and wombs.

Secondly, the reception of Jesus into Mary's heart and womb was carried out thanks to Her faith. Unlike Zechariah, Mary trusted God unreservedly. She believed that for God nothing was impossible and became Mother of the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. The candle and its light also stand for Mary's faith. It is the faith that does not yield to the darkness of the night, that feeds on God's promise, God's love and God's omnipotence.

Lastly, the burning candle symbolises Mary carrying a child after conceiving Jesus, when Her womb housed the Saviour – Light of the World and She waited for His birth to show the Light unto the world. In this respect, the hymns of the Fathers of the Church call Mary "Morning Star" (aurora, dawn). This comparison refers to the star that shines brighter than any other just before daybreak. It precedes the dawn at hand.¹⁷ Mary's coming into the world and Her mission preceded Christ's birth in the same way as the morning star precedes sunrise. Carrying Christ in Her womb for nine month, She announced His birth.

The image of Mary as a Star is very popular today, especially when we look at Her and call Her "Star of the New Evangelisation."

It is worth bearing in mind that St John Paul II and his successors have called Mary "Star of the New Evangelisation." This metaphor not only refers to that fact that Mary holds Jesus in her arms and shows Him – the living Gospel – to us, as we see it in the painting by Dina Belotti. Calling Mary "Star" takes us back to the long-lasting practice of seeking and finding the right path by wanderers and sailors thanks to the arrangement of stars (especially the so-called North Star). Mary, who points to Christ and demonstrates how to live the Gospel, is like a star to us that in the darkness of the contemporary world shows us the way to the Port of Salvation, to Christ."¹⁸

¹⁷ Cf. Adam Wojtczak, "Teologiczny sens maryjnego tytułu 'Gwiazda zaranna,'" *Studia War-mińskie* 48 (2011): 93.

¹⁸ Grzegorz Bartosik, "Maryja jako znak nadziei i Gwiazda Nowej Ewangelizacji," *Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne UKSW* 9 (2014), no. 3: 160. John Paul II, The Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Ad-veniente* (November 10, 1994), no. 59, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19941110_tertio-millennio-advniente.html [November 7, 2016]: "She, the Mother of Fairest Love, will be for Christians on the way to the Great Jubilee of the Third Mil-lennium the Star which safely guides their steps to the Lord. May the unassuming Young Woman of

2.2. Mary as the Model of the Pilgrimage of Faith Up to the End. Holy Saturday as the Day of Mary's Faith

As has been mentioned before, God enlightens the path of man with the light of His Law and commandments so that he may arrive at the final goal of his pilgrimage, to the Father's House. On the part of man, discernment and recognition of the light are achieved through faith and hope. Trusting God, man accepts His orders as right and, obeying them, walks in the light of faith, treads the path of faith that is to guide him to the final goal of the journey, to God, who is the eternal joy of the saved ones.

This light of faith was constantly with Mary in the pilgrimage of Her life. Since the Annunciation, Mary always – and especially during most difficult trials – remembered the words handed over to Her by Archangel Gabriel, who said that “nothing was impossible for God.” When we contemplate Her life and the life of the Holy Family, we make out a number of difficult situations that demanded unlimited faith and trust in God of Mary and St Joseph. The faith was required by the circumstances alone: no room in the inn and abject poverty during the birth of the Son of God. Another trial was Herod's command sentencing the little Jesus and his peers to death. The trial of faith took place during the Holy Family's compulsory flee and stay in Egypt. Mary bore the twelve-year-old Jesus's words found at the Temple in the spirit of faith and humility, even though She did not understand them. Mary begins to “notice that Her Son does not conform to ‘ordinary’ schemes of behaviour and that She is no longer able to understand Him fully. She then has to accept the seeming contradictions – on the one hand, Jesus's childlike obedience and submission [Lk 2:51] and, on the other, His ever growing autonomy triggered by wanting to be ‘in the Father's house’ [Lk 2:49]. Therefore, She is confronted with the mystery of Her Son that She does not entirely understand. All that is left is faith and keeping all these things in Her heart [Lk 2:51].”¹⁹

“Another scene from the Gospel, the miracle at Cana, allows us to assume that the greatest step in Mary's pilgrimage of faith was taken during Jesus's hidden life. Whereas upon finding Jesus at the Temple, Mary did not yet comprehend what it meant for Jesus to be ‘in His Father's house,’ at Cana

Nazareth, who two thousand years ago offered to the world the Incarnate Word, lead the men and women of the new millennium towards the One who is ‘the true light that enlightens every man.’”

¹⁹ Cf. Grzegorz M. Bartosik, *Z Niej narodził się Jezus. Szkice z mariologii biblijnej* (Niepokalanów: Wydawnictwo Ojców Franciszkanów, 2004), 95.

Her faith in the power and mission of Jesus is so great that She provokes His first miracle. Uttering the words: “They have no wine” [Jn 2:3], and even more so: “Do whatever he tells you” [Jn 2:5], Mary manifests Her faith. This is a clear proof of faith, because after all, she had not seen a single miracle worked by Her Son. Cana was the beginning of Jesus’s signs [Jn 2:11].”²⁰

Nevertheless, “the greatest witness Mary bore to Her faith was Her steadfast presence by Her dying Son. Here Mary underwent Her most demanding trial during Her pilgrimage of faith. At the foot of the cross, She resembles the father of our faith – Abraham – who trusted God so much that was even ready to offer his own son as a holocaust. Abraham offered God His only-begotten son, even though by doing this, he would bring to nothing God’s promise of countless offspring, were we to think in human terms. And God, looking on Abraham’s faith, at the very last moment prevented the offering. Another sacrifice, which Mary sees, also seems to bring to nothing the expectations of the new Kingdom and salvation that Jesus was to bring. On Good Friday and Holy Saturday, Mary resorts to nothing but faith in the fact that Her Son’s mission will not prove fruitless – that God is able to give life and Redemption to man despite Jesus’s death. She is left only with the faith that the words She heard at the beginning of Her mission: ‘nothing is impossible for God’ will be fully realized.”²¹

The climax of Mary’s faith was then Holy Saturday. According to the long-lasting tradition, the Saturday after Jesus’s death was the day of Mary’s faith. While Jesus’s body remained in the tomb and His disciples were dispersed and mistrusting, only Mary kept unshaken faith in the fulfillment of the announced Resurrection. “This Saturday, as one of the contemporary theologians writes, is filled with Mary’s faith, as though the faith of the entire Church converged in Her. While the faith has become obscure in all, only Mary – **the First Believer** – sustained its flame, unshaken in the dark, persistent in trial.”²²

To celebrate Mary’s faith professed on Holy Saturday, for ages the Western Church has considered each Saturday as a day dedicated to the Mother of God. “This tradition dates back to the 9th century. It was then that an Irish Benedictine called Alquin (735-804) introduced the whole set of votive Masses for each day of the week in the sacramentary he had compiled – that would become binding in the whole of Charlemagne’s empire. The penultimate day

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 96.

²² Mariano Magrassi, “Maria nel mistero della Chiesa,” *Liturgia* 226-227 (1976): 226-7 and 696-7.

of the week was dedicated to the Holy Cross, and the last one was in honour of Mary. This proposal spread so quickly in the Church that by the 11th century Bernold of Constance duly claimed that ‘almost anywhere on Friday Masses of the Holy Cross are celebrated and on Saturday of the Mother of God’ [PL 151, 1020]. This Medieval tradition, cultivated in the Latin Church for centuries, has stood the test of time. The liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council confirmed this ancient custom by introducing votive texts about the Mother of God prescribed for Saturday into both the Missal and Breviary.”²³

Taking this into consideration, we may assert that in the same way as Mary was the Morning Star that announced the Messiah’s birth in Advent, on Good Friday and Holy Saturday She became the Morning Star announcing the dawn of the Resurrection thanks to Her unshaken faith. Her trustful faith enlightens the darkness of despair, in which Christ’s disciples has got stuck. The lamp of Her faith – as the only one – burns, waiting for the Morning of the Resurrection.

2.3. Easter as the Feast Mary’s Faith

Scripture keeps silent about Mary while giving the account of the events related to Jesus’s Resurrection. It is only after the Ascension that we see Her, when she awaits the Holy Spirit’s descent together with other disciples [Acts 1:14]. In the face of the greatness of the Resurrection of the Son, the Mother remain in the shadow. However, the Tradition of the Church managed to extract something valuable from this shadow, which is expressed by dedicating Saturdays to Mary – the day the precedes the weekly celebration of the Resurrection. The value we have mentioned is putting emphasis on Mary’s faith, which, despite of the tragedy at Golgotha, made her wait unwaveringly for the Morning of the Resurrection.²⁴ Easter is thus, alongside Christ’s triumph over satan and death, also the feast and triumph of Mary’s

²³ Bartosik, *Z niej narodził się Jezus*, 91-2.

²⁴ This is what John Paul II wrote about Mary’s faith: “Yes, truly ‘blessed is she who believed’! These words, spoken by Elizabeth after the Annunciation, here at the foot of the Cross seem to re-echo with supreme eloquence, and the power contained within them becomes something penetrating. From the Cross, that is to say from the very heart of the mystery of Redemption, there radiates and spreads out the prospect of that blessing of faith.” John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (March 25, 1987), no. 19, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater.html [November 7, 2016].

faith, and thereby the feast and triumph of the faith of the Church and of every man who trusts God despite human calculations.

The fact that the Tradition has attributed the perseverance in faith at the most difficult moments to none other than Mary is not unfounded in the light of Biblical evidence. All Her life was filled with unlimited faith and trust in God, which we have written about earlier. The supernatural appreciation of faith on the part of the whole people (*sensus fidei*), which attributes perseverance in faith on Holy Saturday to Mary alone, has shown Her as the Morning Star that sustained the flame of faith in the God's promises and Christ's announcement. Each Saturday reminds us of this. It calls us to remain in faith, just like Mary, waiting for the dawn of resurrection.

Easter is the Triumph and Feast of the Resurrected Lord. Yet, it is also the feast of Mary's faith and in Her and through Her the feast of the faith of the entire Church, feast of each Christian who has not doubted in Christ's power and His promises. Mary teaches us to sustain the flame of faith, even in the most tragic circumstances, trusting that it will meet and shine with a new power, when the light of the Resurrected Lord has been revealed.

3. MARY PREPARING US FOR THE ULTIMATE ENCOUNTER WITH THE LORD – LIGHT FROM LIGHT

3.1. Mary as the Star Leading Us to Our Resurrection

The mission of Mary, who sustained the faith at the birth of the Church, on the evening of Good Friday and throughout Holy Saturday, did not end two thousand years ago. As the recent Council teaches us: “[Mary] taken up to heaven ... but by Her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By Her maternal charity, She cares for the brethren of Her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and cultics, until they are led into the happiness of their true home.”²⁵ One of the forms of Her care about us – brethren and disciples of Her Son – is the fact that She never ceases to give us the example of faith, defending it and strengthening our weak human faith.

²⁵ II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 62, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html [November 7, 2016].

Like in the past, She illuminates the darkness of Holy Saturday also today, with her faith and maternal love, She illuminates the darkness that surrounds the Church on her way to the ultimate encounter with the Lord, before the day comes, when He alone will be the undying light of New Jerusalem. “Night will be no more, nor will they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever” [Rev 22:5].

We are also often surrounded by despair and darkness, like Christ’s disciples surrounded by them on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. We too, looking at what happens in our neighbourhood, seeing the victory of the lie, hatred and power of darkness, tend to say, like the disciples on their way to Emmaus: “But we were hoping... .” It may so happen that we doubt, just like them or Thomas, in Christ’s Resurrection, in our resurrection, in God’s ultimate victory over sin, lies and satan...

Mary, however, never ceases to light the dark, showing Her Son and our ultimate destiny. She – assumed into heaven – rejoices in the glory of resurrection with Her Son and keeps reminding us of the final goal of our earthly pilgrimage. II Vatican Council encapsulates it beautifully: “In the interim just as the Mother of Jesus, glorified in body and soul in heaven, is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected is the world to come, so too does she shine forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come [cf. 2 Pet 2:10], as a sign of sure hope and solace to the people of God during its sojourn on earth.”²⁶

The above words indicate that Mary illuminates our path, which means that She shines for us as a sign of firm hope and consolation. We may claim that She is the Morning Star announcing not only Christ’s Resurrection, but also the dawn of our own resurrection. Her presence in heaven is our strength, while we are pilgrims of faith, because it shows us that the goal that She achieved, is accessible to us as well.

She fulfills Her mission of supporting us on our way to the Father’s House in a few ways.

Firstly, She serves as the model of faith, hope and love, which is the supreme form of help, according to the Roman principle: “Words instruct, illustrations lead.”

Secondly, She defends Christian countries against the attacks of the enemies of the Church. Poland has experienced it many times, when Mary protected our Catholic faith: miraculous defence of Jasna Góra and expulsion

²⁶ Ibid., no. 68.

of protestant Swedes from Poland, the Battle of Vienna and protection and salvage of Poland and Europe from the deluge of Islam, as well as the Miracle at the Vistula and defence of Poland and Europe from the deluge of godless communism.

Thirdly and finally, Mary, through her prayerful intercession, ignites the sparkle of our faith when it dies and is threatened, because Her most important mission, as seen in Cana, is to make them “believe in Him” [Jn 2:11].

3.2. The Woman from Fatima Clothed with the Sun as the Light and Guideline for the Humanity of Today

In the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation, St John describes a great sign in the sky: “A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” [Rev 12:1]. Both the Fathers of the Church and the contemporary exegetes have interpreted the sign of the Woman clothed in the Sun in three ways: it may stand for Israel, from which the Messiah was born; it may signify Mary – Mother of the Messiah – or it may be the Church that has been fighting with the dragon – satan – throughout centuries.²⁷

The Marian interpretation may be found in liturgy, when the excerpt in question is referred to the Assumption of Mary, who is the sign of hope for the People of God during their pilgrimage.

This interpretation was also reminded by Bl Paul VI, when he addressed the apostolic exhortation *Signum magnum* (“A Great Sign”) to the entire Church on 13 May 1967, on the 50th anniversary of the Marian apparition in Fátima. He wrote: “The great sign which the Apostle John saw in heaven, ‘a woman clothed with the sun,’ is interpreted by the sacred Liturgy, not without foundation, as referring to the most blessed Mary, the mother of all men by the grace of Christ the Redeemer.”²⁸ Making reference to the Mother of God’s message from Fátima, Pope called all the faithful to do penance and expiate for the committed sins. His words are as follows: “Impelled by love and by the wish to placate God for the offenses against His sanctity and His justice and, at the same time, moved by trust in His infinite mercy, we must bear the

²⁷ Cf. Franz Mussner, *Maryja Matka Jezusa w Nowym Testamencie* (Kraków: Salwator, 2014), 91-6.

²⁸ Paul VI, Exhortation *Signum magnum* (May 13, 1967), “Introduction,” https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19670513_signum-magnum.html [November 7, 2016].

sufferings of the spirit and of the body that we may expiate our sins and those of our fellow beings and so avoid the twofold penalty or ‘harm’ and of ‘sense,’ that is to say, the loss of God – the supreme good – and eternal fire.”²⁹ Afterwards, the Pope, alluding to the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1942, which would change the history of the World War II, encouraged all the faithful to renew the act personally: “We exhort all the sons of the Church to renew personally their consecration to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of the Church and to bring alive this most noble act of veneration through a life ever more consonant with the divine will and in a spirit of filial service and of devout imitation of their heavenly Queen.”³⁰

We realise that St John Paul II became a particularly Fátima-loving pope. After the assassination attempt and miraculous salvage thanks to Our Lady of Fátima, Pope resorted to the content of the apparitions of Mary and the so-called secrets of Fátima and undertook to act upon them. The pinnacle of these actions was the consecration of the world and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1984. We know this act changed the course of history and led to the fall of communism and the Soviet Union.

In fact, if we read the Fátima apparitions in the spirit of faith, we see that God send the Virgin Mary so that She may prepare us for the ultimate encounter with Him – in the dimension of both our personal lives and the history of mankind.

In the accounts of the apparitions that Sister Lúcia left us in her memoirs, the element of light and the sun is very clear. Mary’s descends to earth were always accompanied by unearthly brightness that the children were unable to describe. They sensed, though, that the amazing light had come from God and was but a foreshadowing of the greatest light of Divine presence. In the context of our work, we may assert that by appearing in Fátima, Mary became, as in the case of Advent and Holy Saturday, the Morning Star that announced the true Sun – brightness and glory of God Himself.

The so-called Miracle of the Sun, which took place on 13 October 1917, was an extraordinary event that confirmed the veracity of the apparitions. It proved that God is the Lord of the universe and powers of nature, and even the star that makes it possible for us to live – the Sun – is obedient to his orders and might move against law of nature.³¹

²⁹ Ibid., II, no. 4.

³⁰ Ibid., no. 8.

³¹ Cf. Leonard Głowacki, *Podejmować na nowo fatimskie orędzie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 2013), 122.

The Fátima apparitions contain the message addressed to the entire mankind. Our lot depends on fulfilling God's commands given to us and popes by Mary – not only the future of countries and nations, but also the future of each one of us.

Just as Mary preceded and brought the Light of world – Christ – to mankind; just as Her faith enlightened the dark of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, so too She is coming to us now as the Star that points to the way of salvation, the way back to God. She is the Star that comes before the ultimate coming of God as the just Judge – hence her call for conversion and penance, for expiation for the sins committed by us, for offering sacrifice for sinners so that they may not be condemned, for the incessant prayer of the Holy Rosary. God is throwing us a lifeline in the form of the devotion of the first Saturdays of the month.³²

The Lord Jesus commissioned a special mission to His vicars, i.e. popes. Their task was to consecrate Russia to the Immaculate heart of Mary in order to save the world from wars and spread of the communist atheism. The acts from 1942 and 1984 brought about blessed results.³³ Have the predictions contained in the third Fátima secret been fulfilled yet? Or are we still expecting bloody persecutions of the Church? We do witness it in so many a Muslim country.

3.3. The Immaculate Heart of Mary as the Light on the Path the Leads Us to the Dawn of our Resurrection.

A number of outstanding theologians have tried to comprehend why God wished to introduce the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the forms of both the first Saturdays of the month and the act of consecration.

Ought we not to consecrate ourselves to God alone? Is He not the only One worthy of praise and glory?

Seeking the answers to this Divine plan, it seems that it may be similar to the one given by God when His Son became a poor man in a forgotten village in the backwoods. The miracle of the Incarnation was the reply to the

³² Sister Maria Lúcia of the Immaculate Heart, *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: The Memoirs of Sister Lucia, the Last Fatima Visionary* (n.p. KIC, 2015).

³³ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Message of Fatima*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html [November 7, 2016].

pride of satan and the original parents – Adam and Eve. By assuming the form of a servant and humbling Himself, Christ showed that the true greatness and dignity of man consist in the humble service to God and man, as well as in love up to giving up one's life.

Today, God shows us the model of manhood in the person of the Mother of His Son. The Immaculate one, never subjected to satan, is the masterpiece of the creation. She is the new Eve that has never said no to God. Her heart, under which She carried the Son of God is the symbol of sign of total love, patterned after Jesus's love.

To consecrate oneself to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means to trust Divine Wisdom, instead of one's own, unlimitedly, which means obedience to God's intentions; contemplation of this Immaculate Heart so as to learn obedience, humility and love from the Immaculata; transformation into new Adams and Eves according to the Divine plan of the creation.

If we look at the Divine plan of salvation of our times in this way, we shall see that God has sent Mary in the same way as He would send prophets in the Old Testament.³⁴ He has sent Her as the Morning Star to show us the Lord who is coming, to remind us that we should look on our lives in Christ's light, because He is Light from Light. Only in Christ's splendour will we be able to discern and combat sin in our lives. Only then will we be able to make sacrifices out of love and expiate for ourselves and our brothers, who are sinners.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary has also taught us to light the path for our sisters and brothers with our conduct, prayers and expiatory practices. They are in dire straits, especially in the situation of sin. Let us be signs and stars that point to the path to God, just like Mary. Let our actions and words show them the true and unique Light of the worlds – our Lord Jesus Christ.

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³⁴ Cf. W. Bożejewicz, *Prorocki charakter Objawień Matki Bożej w Fatimie w interpretacji i wykładni Kościoła Katolickiego*, PhD thesis on Mariology written under the supervision of Fr. Prof. Grzegorz Bartosik OFMConv in the Chair of Mariology at the Department of Theology of UKSW (Warszawa: Centrum Studiów Mariologicznych Kolbianum, 2015), MS.

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