

fact that she does not appear in the Gospel narratives, with the other women, is, as John Paul II points out, an indication that our Lady had already met with Jesus. "This deduction is also confirmed," the Pope adds, "by the fact that the first witnesses of the resurrection were, by Christ's will, the women who had remained faithful at the foot of the Cross, and who therefore were firmer in their faith" (Audience, May 21, 1997). Only Mary had kept her faith fully intact during the bitter hours of the Passion; therefore it seems only natural that our Lord would appear first to her.

We have to always stay close to our Lady, even more at Easter time, and learn from her. With what eagerness she had awaited the Resurrection! Mary knew that Jesus had come to save the world and that, therefore, he had to suffer and die; but she also knew that he could not remain subject to death, because he is Life.

A good way to live the time of Easter is to strive to help others share in Christ's life, fulfilling with great diligence the new commandment of charity that our Lord gave us on the eve of his passion: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The risen Christ now repeats this to each of us. He tells us: truly love one another; strive every day to serve the others; be concerned about the slightest details to make life agreeable to those who live with you.

But let us return to the scene of Jesus as He appears to his Blessed Mother. How happy must our Lady have been to contemplate that most

Holy Humanity—flesh of her flesh and life of her life—now fully glorified! Let us ask her to teach us to sacrifice ourselves for the others without being noticed, without even looking for thanks. May we have a hunger to pass unnoticed, so as to possess God's life and communicate it to others. Today let us address the Queen of Heaven with the greeting proper to the Easter season. *Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia. / For he whom you did merit to bear, alleluia. / Has risen as he said, alleluia. / Rejoice and be glad O Virgin Mary, Alleluia. / For the Lord is truly risen, alleluia.*

Rome April 5, 2004

Interview by the Zenit News Agency

1. *In your statement regarding March 11, you invited people to pray for the terrorists. Is it possible to pray for people who are capable of such savage acts?*

All we need to do is look at Jesus Christ, our model at all times. His example leads us to say, *yes*, it is possible to pray when one knows how to distinguish between the crime and its perpetrator. When we pray for those who kill so savagely, we don't deny the evil of their deeds or the need to bring them to judgment before the law. There is no justification for evil. Violence is indefensible. But intransigence with evil is surely compatible with something that goes to the heart of the Church's mission—pardoning sinners. Justice is not in conflict with mercy.

2. *Christ says in the Gospel: "Love your enemies." What does it mean to love terrorists?*

Jesus invites us to practice mercy not only towards those we love, but also towards our enemies, even those who cause us direct and unjustified harm. Here we confront an indecipherable mystery, although one that can be understood to some extent through the marvelous prism of charity. How is it to be applied to a terrorist? By praying for his conversion, that is, for his redemption, raising our sights above his just punishment in this life.

3. *Is it possible to forgive someone who doesn't want to be forgiven? How do we put this forgiveness into practice?*

I think we need to begin by practicing the spirit of forgiveness in our daily life. We need to learn to forgive, and to ask for forgiveness, on a small scale, in our family, professional and social relationships. Paraphrasing the Gospel, a person who forgives in small things will be able to forgive in great ones. I saw this very clearly in St. Josemaría Escrivá, who never felt himself to be the enemy of anyone, not even of those who mistreated him.

4. *In Spain, in recent decades, I imagine that members of the Prelature, or persons close to it, have been affected by terrorism. What has been your own experience?*

I have shared that terrible experience with members of the Prelature and with other Catholics, not

only in Spain but also in countries such as Colombia, to cite only one example. It is an experience that causes great devastation and pain. The blow is so great that it can lead to a loss of emotional control. But I have witnessed, thanks be to God, how persons affected in their family, or personally, have been able to rise above themselves and react with heroism. They refuse to base their life on hatred. Planting the seed of hatred is perhaps the most diabolical effect of terrorism. Instead these persons decided to continue on their Christian path, perhaps even more firmly than before. I am convinced that those who are victims of terrorism can count on a special grace from God to give them strength. Thus they can be a light shining in the darkness for those around them.

5. *What do you see as the key elements of a Christian response to Islamic terrorism?*

It is important not to mistake a part for the whole, or to blame a group of countries made up of hundreds of millions of people, an entire culture, for the actions of a minority. Therefore I don't like to use the expression "Islamic terrorism." I think the Muslims themselves, the many peaceful citizens who love freedom and life—their own and that of others—and who practice their religion sincerely and without fanaticism, should play an important role in the victory over terrorism. I also see Catholic Arabs playing an essential role, because they can provide bridges of understanding.