

In Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

Who was the first person to see the Resurrected Jesus? Based upon the Protestant heresy of “*sola Scriptura*” (the Bible alone), many people would answer that Mary Magdalene was the first person to see Our Risen Lord on Easter Sunday.

However, as Catholics, we do not subscribe to *sola Scriptura*. Our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Faith, which was founded by Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, has taught from the beginning that the answers to our theological questions are based upon the twin pillars of Truth, known as the Deposit of Faith: Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, which are both equally valid and not contradictory.

Based upon all of the evidence, including the empty tomb, we can indeed conclude that Mary Magdalene was *not* the first to see the Resurrected Jesus.

Sacred Scripture

Sacred Scripture provides more questions than answers as to *who* was the first to see Jesus on that first Easter. The empty tomb begs the question as to *where* was Jesus. The absence of the Blessed Virgin Mary leads one to ponder *why* the Mother of God was missing.

Matthew 28 says that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (not Jesus’ Mother) were met at the empty tomb by an angel who told them that Jesus was not there, for He is risen, and that they would see Him in Galilee.

Mark 16 records that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome found a young man sitting in an otherwise empty tomb, telling them that Jesus is risen and that they will see Him in Galilee.

Luke 24 tells us that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and other women did not find the Body of Jesus in the tomb, but that two men in shining apparel told them that Jesus is risen.

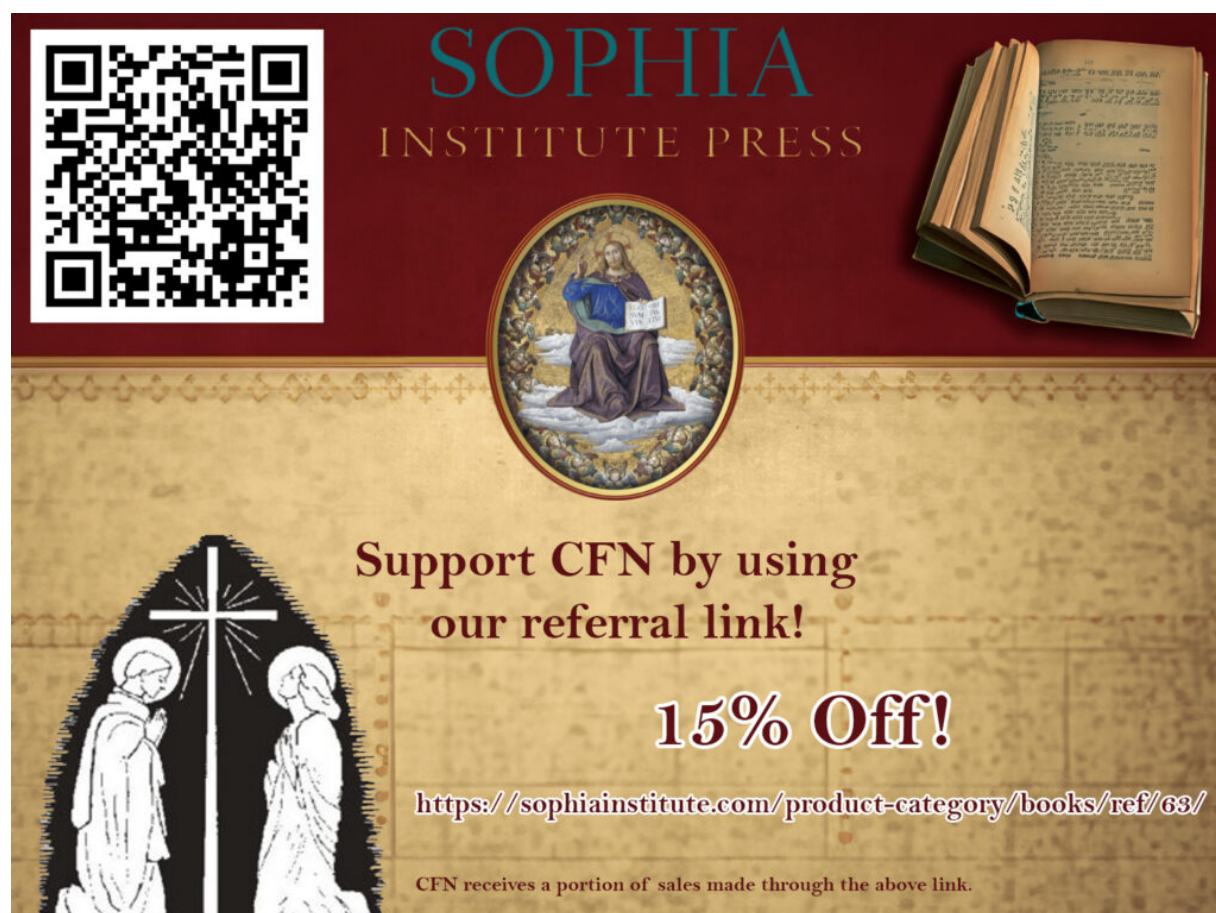
John 20 records that Mary Magdalene came to the empty tomb and ran back to Simon Peter and John and said: “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.”

So where was Jesus at these moments? And why was the Virgin Mary not with Mary Magdalene and the other women at the empty tomb? The likely answer to these questions, raised by Sacred Scripture, is simply that the Resurrected Jesus was with His Blessed

Mother.

Do not be intimidated when someone attacks Catholic beliefs by asking, “Where is that in the Bible?!” Not everything Jesus said and did is in the Bible; just ask them to read the last verse of St. John’s Gospel, where it is written: “But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25).

The evidence from the Bible is clear: Jesus was not in the empty tomb on Easter Sunday, and His Blessed Mother did not go to the tomb. The Bible itself leads us to conclude that the Risen Lord, at the very first, visited His Mother after the Resurrection. Jesus and Mary were together at the time when neither were present at the empty tomb on Easter Sunday.



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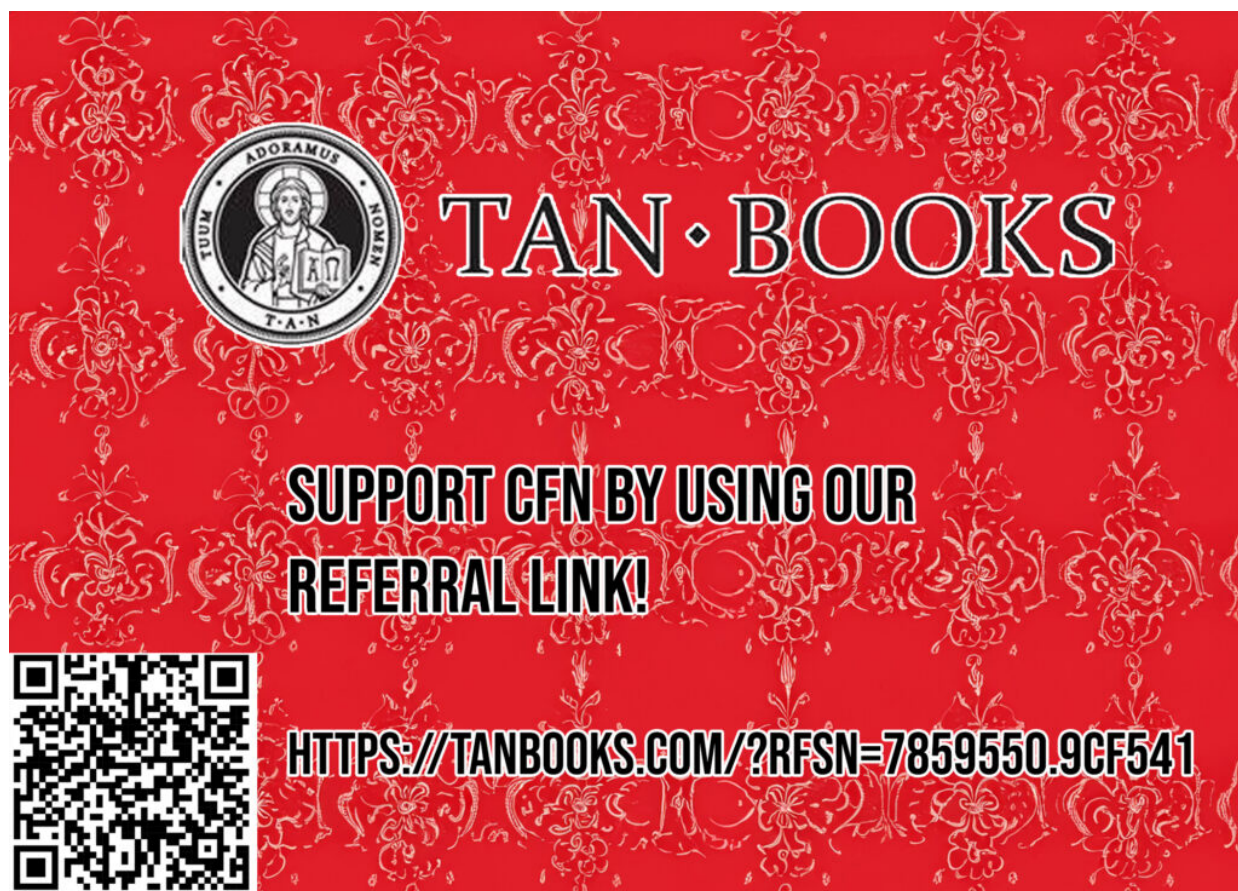
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Church Tradition

An eminent theologian of our times, the now-deceased Servant of God Fr. John Hardon (1914-2000), who suffered greatly in our troubled times for the one true Faith, [wrote](#): “It is

not only a pious opinion that the Risen Savior first appeared to His Mother Mary on Easter Sunday. No less than six Doctors of the Church, including Sts. Ambrose, Anselm and Albert the Great held that Our Lady was the first witness of the Resurrection.” There are other testimonies to this belief:

- The earliest Church Father to accept this was St. Ignatius of Antioch, who lived from A.D. 35 to 110, just one generation removed from Christ. St. Ignatius was friends with the Apostles, Sts. Peter and John. St. Ignatius of Antioch taught that the Risen Lord first appeared to His Blessed Mother. St. Ambrose, who lived between A.D. 340 and 397, also believed that Jesus appeared to His Mother ([source](#)).
- At the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, dating back to the fourth century, there was a chapel dedicated to Jesus’ Resurrection appearance to His Mother. Pope Benedict XIV (r. 1740-1758) [declared](#) that Jesus appearing to the Blessed Virgin Mary first is “based on the tradition proclaimed by ancient architectural and liturgical monuments, starting from Jerusalem itself.”
- St. Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419) [said](#) that many theologians agree, “The first apparition that [Jesus] gave was to the Blessed Virgin Mary, although the Gospel does not tell us about this.”
- St. Bridget of Sweden (d. 1373) [stated](#): “We read that Mary Magdalene, and the Apostles were first to see the risen Christ. But we may believe that Mary His Mother knew of His rising before all others, and that She was the first to see Him. It was Mary in Her lowliness who first gave praise and adoration to the Risen Christ.”
- In his *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) [wrote](#) at the start of his meditations on the Resurrection of Christ: “First, He appeared to the Virgin Mary. This, although it is not said in Scripture, is included in saying that He appeared to so many others, because Scripture supposes that we have understanding, as it is written: ‘Are you also without understanding?’”
- In recent times, Pope John Paul II (r. 1978-2005) [asked](#): “How could the Blessed Virgin, present in the first community of disciples, be excluded from those who met Her Divine Son after He had risen from the dead?” He continued: “Indeed, it is legitimate to think that the Mother was probably the first person to whom the risen Jesus appeared.” Thus, he posited that Our Lady’s absence from the group of women present at the empty tomb would “indicate that She had already met Jesus.”



Mystics of the Church

Ven. Mary of Agreda (1602-1665), the religious Superioress of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Spain, also known as Sister Mary of Jesus, had a vision of which she recorded in her Church-approved writings entitled *The Mystical City of God*:

“After Jesus our Savior, arisen and glorified, had visited and filled with glory His most Blessed Mother, He resolved, as the loving Father and Pastor, to gather the sheep of His flock, which the scandal of His sufferings had disturbed and scattered. The holy Patriarchs and all whom He had rescued from limbo continually remained in His company, although they did not manifest themselves and remained invisible during His apparitions; only our great Queen was privileged to see them, know them and speak to them all during the time intervening between the Resurrection and the Ascension of her Divine Son. Whenever the Lord did not appear to others, He remained with His beloved Mother in the Cenacle; nor did she ever leave this place during all the forty days. There she enjoyed the Presence of the Redeemer of the world and of the choir of

Prophets and Saints, by whom the King and Queen were attended. For the purpose of making His Resurrection known to His Apostles, He began by showing Himself to the women, not on account of their weakness, but because they were stronger in their belief and in their hope of the Resurrection; for this is the reason why they merited the privilege of being the first to see Him arisen.”[\[1\]](#)

Bl. Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824), an Augustinian Canoness and stigmatist, had a vision of Jesus’ Resurrection appearance to His Blessed Mother, which she recorded in her writings entitled, *The Life of Jesus Christ and Biblical Revelations*. In this work, which contains a *Nihil Obstat* and an *Imprimatur*, she wrote:

“I saw an angel appear to the Blessed Virgin. He announced to her that the Lord was near and bade her to go to the little gate belonging to Nicodemus. At these words, Mary’s heart was filled with joy. Without saying a word to the holy women, wrapped in her mantle, she hastened to the gate in the city wall through which she had come on her return from the garden of the tomb. It may have been almost nine o’clock when, in a solitary place near the gate, I saw the Blessed Virgin suddenly halt in her hurried walk. She gazed as if ravished with joyous longing at the top of the wall. Floating down toward her in the midst of a great multitude of the souls of the ancient Patriarchs, I saw the most holy soul of Jesus, resplendent with light and without trace of wound. Turning to the Patriarchs and pointing to the Blessed Virgin, He uttered the words: ‘Mary, My Mother!’ and appeared to embrace her. Then He vanished. The Blessed Virgin sank on her knees and kissed the ground upon which He had stood. She left the impress of her knees and feet upon the stone. Inexpressibly consoled, she hurried back to the women, whom she found busied preparing ointment and spices on a table. She did not tell them what had happened, but she consoled and strengthened them in faith.”[\[2\]](#)



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Conclusion

Who was the first person to see the Resurrected Lord Jesus? The answer, reflected in the Bible, and according to Tradition reflected by great saints, Church-approved mystics, theologians and popes, is that He first appeared to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Where was Jesus when the empty tomb was found? He was with His Mother, Mary. Why was His Blessed Mother Mary not at the empty tomb? She was not at the empty tomb because the Mother of God was meeting face to face with her Divine Son, Who had risen as He said.

Sola Scriptura would declare that Mary Magdalene was the first to see the Risen Lord. However, the Bible speaks, but not alone, as it is joined by Sacred Tradition to witness to the Truth: Our Risen Lord first appeared to His Blessed Mother.

The Blessed Virgin Mary was the first to receive Him at the Annunciation; the first to see His Holy Face when He was born. Therefore, it is truly right and just that she would be the first to see Him when He rose from the dead. *Vere dignum et justum est.*

Regina Caeli

The prayer that captures the Blessed Virgin Mary's joy over the Resurrection of her Divine Son is the *Regina Caeli* (said in place of the Angelus during Eastertide, from Easter Sunday until Pentecost).

In Latin:

V. Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia.

R. Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia.

V. Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia.

R. Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

V. Gaude et laetare, Virgo Maria, alleluia.

R. Quia surrexit Dominus vere, alleluia.

Oremus: Deus, qui per resurrectionem Filii tui, Domini nostri Iesu Christi, mundum laetificare dignatus es: praesta, quaesumus; ut per eius Genetricem Virginem Mariam, perpetuae capiamus gaudia vitae. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

In English:

V. Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.

R. For He Whom thou didst merit to bear, alleluia.

V. Hath risen, as He said, alleluia.

R. Pray for us to God, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

R. For the Lord hath risen indeed, alleluia.

Let us pray: O God, Who gavest joy to the world through the Resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant that we may obtain, through His Virgin Mother Mary, the joys of everlasting life, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

[1] Mary of Agreda, *The Mystical City of God* Vol. III (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2006), Part II,

Chapter XXVII, #766, p. 738. Available to read online [here](#).

[2] Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Life of Jesus Christ and Biblical Revelations* Vol. IV (Gastonia: TAN Books, 2021), pp. 357-358. Available to read online [here](#).