

We continue to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the conversion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. His leg wound, caused by a cannonball received at the battle of Pamplona in May 1521, finally healed, although he remained lame all his life. His vision of the world and of his life changed, he felt inspired to follow Christ in a life of poverty, of radical trust in providence. He leaves his family and his aristocratic life to go on a pilgrimage, on foot, to the land of Jesus where he intends to stay.

On his way to Jerusalem, Ignatius stopped for almost a year from March 1522 in the small town of Manresa in Catalonia.

His inner experience in this place was the foundation of his 'Spiritual Exercises', a tool to help others to enter into an inner freedom in communion with God. On the very spot of the little cave where he liked to pray, there is a spiritual retreat house run by the Jesuits. On the occasion of the jubilee, the Jesuit Marko Rupnik dressed the church with 25 representations retracing the history of salvation from creation to Pentecost, including the stages of the spiritual exercises. Rupnik and his team are famous for their contemporary mosaics inspired by the Eastern art of icons and by scriptural meditation.

Let's take a look at one of the most original scenes of this new work, one from the season of Easter.



We recognize Christ, standing, with his cruciform halo. Two women and a man are sitting around a table. One might think that this represent the hospitality at Bethany.

On closer inspection, we see Christ talking to one of the women. In the Spiritual Exercises St Ignatius takes up a medieval tradition. The first person the risen one visits is Mary, his mother. Ignatius notes with a touch of humour that *'although it is not stated in Scriptures, it is assumed to have been included in the statement that he appeared to so many others, for Scriptures supposes that we are capable of understanding, as it is written: 'Are you also without understanding?'* (SE 299) The eyes of Mary and Jesus meet. Mary puts one hand over her heart. The other hand holds the same ball of wool as in the Annunciation mosaic in the same church, indicating that she is weaving divinity with humanity in her womb. Gold is the colour of divinity and red that of humanity in Rupnik's symbolism. Mary is not living alone, the first church community is created around her. John, who has welcomed her into his home, is already beginning to write the book of Revelation. On the scroll, the outline of the heavenly Jerusalem can be seen. The other woman is Mary Magdalene, holding a vase. She is preparing to go to the tomb at dawn to embalm the body of Jesus. Both John and Magdalene will see the empty tomb. Jesus will meet them each in their own way. This scene reminds us in Marko Rupnik's mosaic sequence that death does not have the last word. In the cross, the love of God is revealed.

Written from Manresa, la Cave of St Ignatius.  
Marie-Christine  
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