

Ave Maria: Seeking Jesus in tragedy

As the news reports broke about Notre Dame Cathedral, the world seemed to stop. The flames didn't seem real.

A cathedral so historic, so iconic, so beautiful, so loved by so many couldn't be ablaze. It couldn't be destroyed.

But the photos and videos just kept coming. It was intensely painful, but vivid and real.

Through all the news reports, I kept looking for some reference that the Eucharist had been removed from the Cathedral. I assumed—hoped—that a priest would have tried to save the Blessed Sacrament.

Yet somehow, in the midst of all the updates that statues had been removed for cleaning and that much of the artwork had been carried out safely, I couldn't find anything about the Blessed Sacrament.

Not for hours.

Where was Jesus? Why didn't anyone seem to be concerned about whether Jesus—the One the church was built to house and honor and celebrate, to bring generations of people together in worship for hundreds of years—was still in the tabernacle?

It started feeling a little like Holy Saturday—when there's an emptiness, but we haven't yet entered the glory of Easter.

I found myself thinking of how Mary Magdalene came to the tomb on Easter morning and says in the Book of John, Chapter 20, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him."

Where was Jesus? Why, in all the chaos and worry and weeping, did it seem that no one was asking whether His body had been rescued from the flames and smoke?

Then, late in the evening, I finally came across a news report that said that the

chaplain of the Paris Firefighters had gone back into the cathedral to rescue the Blessed Sacrament and the Crown of Thorns.

The Crown of Thorns. I hadn't even realized that such a relic existed. I showed our children the photo of the altar and cross, shining and standing strong.

"Of course, it's still there," my son said.

Of course. Such faith. The faith of a child.

So much has been lost. It's incomprehensible. My heart breaks for Paris, for France, for all those whose hearts and souls have been touched by that magnificent cathedral, and for all those—like me—who never had the chance to see it in all its grandeur.

So much still remains—love for all that Notre Dame represents and brings to life, hope that the spirit of the people who love Notre Dame will stay strong, and faith in all the future may bring.

And we have Jesus—in our hearts and in ourselves. Of course, He is with us always.