

# Holy Week reflections through the eyes of Mary Magdalene

*Gospel readings are abridged and paraphrased*



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## Palm Sunday

### Reading:

A few days before the Passover Festival, a large crowd gathered in Jerusalem to see Jesus, because his fame has spread. So he sent his disciples to fetch a donkey. They placed their cloaks over the donkey's back and on the path before him. As he rode into Jerusalem the crowd waved palm branches and cried out, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

### Reflection:

*That day, when our little group entered Jerusalem with Jesus (before the terrible events that were to come) we were excited and apprehensive all at once.*

*In the weeks before, our Master had told us of what awaited him here, but I suppose we didn't want to believe it. And this procession ....the shouting "Hosannah to the Son of David!" and the palm branches.....well, we were all carried along with the excitement.*

*Perhaps we wanted to dispel the feeling of tension that was rife in the city, threatening to boil over at any moment. Perhaps we wanted to stay in that moment of wonderful triumph, but I couldn't help feeling that it all resembled the roar that went up when the gladiator entered the arena, to signal the beginning of the game.*

*The difference was the Jesus came into this arena unarmed and defenceless - no armour, no spear, no shield. And it wouldn't be long before, as in all blood sports, the crowd would be entertained by his death.*

*But it seemed that even this was denied us, because we found the tomb empty. It looked as though someone had stolen the body. It was the final straw, and I fell apart.*

*The others fled, but I stayed there. All I could do was weep. Then a man I thought was the gardener asked me why I was crying. I sobbed as I asked him where the body was. But then I heard my name being called. And not just that, but by a familiar voice. I looked up, and through the blur of my tears recognised my Lord. Can you imagine my amazement, my joy? It was almost too good to be true, but it was true.*

*Jesus told me to go to the others and tell them the good news, which was exactly what I did. At first they didn't believe me (do you blame them?!) but then Peter and John went to see for themselves, and came back rejoicing.*

*How could this be? We couldn't comprehend it. All we knew was that our Jesus, who had been so cruelly killed, was now alive, still bearing the wounds of the nails.*

*Can you hear him calling your name? Can you share in our joy*

*There has never been such a terrible day for me before or since. I remembered his words about taking up his cross and following him, but never imagined it would come so soon and cost so much. But what else could I do?*

*If you love somebody, wouldn't you follow them into death?*

### EasterDay

#### Reading:

Early on the Sunday morning, before dawn, Mary Magdalene, a follower of Jesus, came with some women to the tomb to complete Jesus' anointing. It couldn't be done on the Friday because Passover began at sunset, and nothing could be done on the Sabbath.

When they got to the tomb, they found that the stone had been rolled away and that it was empty. Mary thought someone had stolen the body, and was very frightened. She began to weep. Just then, Jesus stood before her and said, "Why are you weeping?" She thought he was the gardener, and answered, "Someone has taken the body. Please tell me where they have laid him." Jesus said softly, "Mary." and then she recognised him, and said "Rabbouni!", which means 'teacher.'

Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me, but go to the others and tell them what you have seen." Mary went to the disciples and said, "I have seen the Lord!" and told them all that had happened.

#### Reflection:

*Somehow we endured the emptiness of the Sabbath, and as soon as possible on the Sunday morning we women made our way to the tomb to complete our anointing and to grieve.*

*Is that all that this amazing gentle man meant to these people - entertainment? Do we, like them, long/or his victory over adversity, then turn on him **if** he doesn't perform it the way we want, **if** he doesn't fight back?*

*What do you make of this moment?*

### Maundy Thursday:

#### Reading:

Jesus gathered with his disciples to celebrate the Passover meal in an upstairs room. During the meal he took off his outer garments, tied a towel around his waist, poured water into a bowl, and began to wash their feet.

They were astonished, because this was the job of a servant or slave. Jesus said, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me 'Teacher,' and 'Lord,' and that's what I am. So ifl, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, that's what you should do, wash each other's feet..... Tonight I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you."

#### Reflection:

*It was we, the women, who prepared the table and the Seder meal - the karpas, the charoset, bitter herbs, the roast lamb shank, the bread and the common cup for the wine. We waited in the background as events unfolded.*

*This was supposed to be a celebration of liberation of the Children of Israel from Egypt, but try as we might, we could not overcome the feeling of impending doom.*

*At one point Jesus took a towel and bowl and began to wash the disciples' feet, a job usually given to a slave. It was then that I realised (was it womens' intuition?) that he was preparing to give himself up, to lose himself in humility. I could hardly bear it, and wept as he ministered to the disciples.*

*Soon after that, after a quiet conversation between Jesus and others that I was unable to hear, Judas left. It wasn't until later that I understood why.*

*Then Jesus told us many things that really didn't sink in, about serving as he served, and leaving us but sending the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to be with us - things we didn't understand until a long time after..... well, after all the events to come.*

*Then he broke the bread and passed it around, and then blessed the cup and offered it to all at table, saying that these were his body and blood. It reminded me of the lambs soon to be slaughtered in the Temple, a sacrifice for our sins, and my blood ran cold.*

*Could I serve as he served? Could I follow him to the cross? Could you?*

### Good Friday:

#### Reading:

When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, his disciples all fled. They took him to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where he was tried and convicted of blasphemy, because he had claimed that he was a king. Then they took him to Pilate, who handed him over to the soldiers.

From there he was taken to Golgotha, a hill outside Jerusalem, to be crucified.

There the soldiers laid him on a cross, drove nails through his hands and feet, and set the cross upright, between two thieves who were also being crucified. The soldiers tossed dice for his clothing, and the crowd jeered at him. He said,

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

At about three in the afternoon he died. They took him down, and laid him in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Aramathea.

#### Reflection:

*In all fairness, the disciples, being men, were in far more danger than we woman. I didn't blame them for running away, but I wept for my Lord as he struggled with his demons in the garden. I wanted to hold him and comfort him, but knew it was something he had to do alone.*

*Then they came to arrest him. We followed at a distance, to witness his so called trial and degradation at the hands of the Roman soldiers.*

*There was no sleep for us that night. The following morning our grief was almost unbearable, as the crowds bayed for his blood, and he was led away to be crucified. I stood with Mary, his mother, and John, the youngest disciple, at the foot of his cross as he bled and cried out to God and, incredibly, forgave his persecutors.*

*And while the lambs were being slaughtered in the temple, this lamb was dying for us.*

*When it was all over the soldiers allowed us to take his body and lay it in the tomb borrowed from Joseph of Aramathea.*