

**Holy Week Monologues**  
**in the voices of women who were there**



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## Palm Sunday

It was a beautiful day; the sun was shining and we had gathered on the banks of the Jordan River. We were here at the invitation of John, known as the Baptist. His words had spoken to our family and we knew it was time to refocus and reclaim our faith. That was the first time I saw Jesus of Nazareth. He was just one in the crowd wanting also to be baptized. I had no idea the impact he would have on my life and indeed the world. We left the river and it was some time before I saw him again. I heard that he was teaching in the countryside and that is when I saw him again. This time it was on a mountainside and there were thousands gathered. He had a presence and air about him that caused you to really stop and listen. He spoke of blessings, comfort, hope, mercy, righteousness and peace. His words touched the inner most part of my being and I knew that I could not simply sit on the sidelines. I decided I would join the others who walked with him. He did not mind that I was a woman, in fact, he accepted me and treated me with respect and dignity. I learned quickly that I was not alone. His followers included many other women including his mother, Mary.

The story that I want to share with you today took place just a week before he was killed. Although, on that day we did not know for certain the severity of the situation. Like so many others we were making our way to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Passover. We neared the city, came upon a community well and stopped. We had been traveling for some time and a rest was needed so we were pleased when our group came to a standstill. I drew a cup of water to hand to Jesus. He called James and John and told them they were to go ahead of us into the city, find a donkey and bring it back. The request seemed rather strange but we learned long ago that Jesus usually had a purpose. James questioned where they would find this donkey and how, on earth, were they going to convince its owner to let them have it. Jesus assured them that it would all work out and, of course, it did. They left and we waited. By the time they returned the crowd of pilgrims had begun to grow. We still did not understand what Jesus was going to do with the donkey but I remember thinking that something was about to happen and Jesus intended to make a statement that would not soon be forgotten. Some of us tried to convince him to rethink whatever he was about to do. You see, Jesus had been under the scrutiny of the authorities and it was whispered that they were seeing to kill him. Another scene would not be taken well. Once Jesus decided though, there wasn't much that we could do but follow.

The minute he sat on the donkey, I knew! The voices of the ancestors echoed in my being

"Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your King is coming to you. He is just and endowed with salvation. Humble and mounted on a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem and the bow of war will be cut off. He will speak peace to the nations and his dominion will be from sea to sea."

We processed into the city, the crowds were getting larger and excitement was mounting. It was obvious that I was not the only one who remembered the ancestor's words - palms were waving and cloaks were strewn on the road, as Jesus passed through the crowds shouted.... *(Choir parades from the back singing or have several people cues to shout "Hosanna in the highest, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" several times)*

I watched and knew that the tides had changed. There would be no turning back and deep down I knew that there would be more to come in the days ahead. Tension and excitement mingled together and I wondered what the consequences would be. Jesus spoke truth to power and risked everything. On that day, he began a revolution, giving all that he had to bring his dream to life. We were swept up in his vision and he invited us to do as he did. It would mean commitment, determination and risk - moving from words to action.

What he asked of us 2000 years ago he also asks of you.

Are you ready?

## The Cleansing of the Temple

My name is Anna, although few people knew it and even fewer ever said it. I was one of those who were among the unseen. Some, who couldn't close their eyes, saw me as a beggar. I was here because of circumstance. My husband died and left me without home or status. With no way to make a living I sought sustenance in any way I could. While I had nothing to speak of from a material perspective, I did have my faith. I knew the stories of the ancestors and the Divine presence that led them from slavery into freedom. I knew the divine directives to care for the widow and the orphan and I held on to the hope that someday someone would hear and heed. For many years I went to the temple to find solace and to have my soul fed but that stopped when the temple became more and more a place of commerce and power.

I remember well the day that the spirit rose and blew through the temple ushering in a time of change. Earlier that day I joined the pilgrims on the way to Passover and what turned out to be the entry of a man named Jesus of Nazareth into the city. I heard the stories about him over the last couple of years but never had the opportunity to hear him for myself. Many wondered if he was the Chosen one for whom we had waited. He was a man of deep faith and compassion. He spoke to all about justice and mercy. He was a healer of body, mind and spirit. He was on a donkey, a very strange sight really and the people were excited. They shouted words of praise, as if he was indeed a king. I fell in behind him wondering what he was going to do; praying that it would be dramatic and transforming but nothing could have prepared me for what happened. Through the city streets he rode and headed straight for the temple. I almost stopped then, knowing that I would not be allowed to go inside but something pushed me forward. He entered, I stayed outside and listened. *(Pause)*

*(Tables set up at the front. Have someone, as Jesus, come to the front Flipping over the tables, shout "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of thieves." Then walk away. Return to the voice of Anna)*

It was then that the doors of the temple opened. Those inside were sent out and the ignored, rejected and oppressed were let in.

While life for me would still be a struggle in that moment something amazing happened and I stepped out on the road to freedom.

Today, I ask you to remember his anger at injustice; remember his instructions that this is a place of prayer for all the nations; and may you continue to keep your doors open that I may enter in and be fed for the journey.

## The Anointing of Jesus

In the stories that are told of me my name is not recorded. You may call me Elizabeth. Some have told my story and what they emphasize is the oil I poured and Jesus telling everyone that it was okay. Some people see me as having done something extraordinary and others name me as wasteful. I would like to tell you the whole story.

Although women were not numbered among the chosen 12, there were many of us who followed him. We left our homes and families. We changed our way of life and we embraced his dream. He touched our lives with power and possibility and we knew that life could be better for all God's children. I heard his words. I saw the difference he made in the lives of people so desperately in need of hope. I watched as he challenged the established order, called the religious leaders to account and brought to life the prophecies of our ancestors. He touched the leper in each of us in need of healing; he taught the old and young alike the creators dance and placed on our lips the melody of peace. Not everyone who followed him saw and understood. Some thought he would help our people overturn the Roman Empire and reclaim the kingdom. Some believed that Jesus would be crowned King. They did not hear him when he said he would most certainly die for what he said and did. They did not hear when he said there was more yet to come marked by hope, promise and new life. But I did. I saw and heard and understood.

For some time he had been preparing us for the possible consequences of his ministry. He knew that he could only defy power for so long before power would push back. He knew that those consequences could be anything from jail to execution. He tried to tell us. He tried to prepare us for continuing his ministry after – whatever happened. In this final week of his life, I watched as he took things to a whole new level. His actions could not be mistaken as he proclaimed a new world order; as he opened the doors of the temple and let in all those who were on the outside and declared that justice would roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

I saw and heard and understood and I felt helpless. Underneath his bold leadership, I saw those moments of fear and uncertainty and his need for strength. I knew, if he could find another way he would. I heard the whispering and the rumours and I knew in my heart he would die for what he believed. I wanted it to be different. I wanted to make it better. I wanted to ease his pain. I wanted him to know that I believed and I would follow to the end and beyond.

Words are empty gestures unless they are accompanied by action. He taught us that and I knew what I must do. In the tradition of my people oil is used for many things – the anointing of a king; to administer healing for body, mind and spirit; and to prepare a body for burial. So, on the third day of his final week I came to him with my jar of oil. Without words, I knelt and anointed him. In doing so I named that I knew he was our king; that he

needed healing and strength for the journey; and I prepared him for burial. I knew I must do this now because there would not be another opportunity. Judas believed that I was wasteful and the others simply did not see or understand. But Jesus did. He knew and understood that someone heard him. Someone believed. Jesus said that, wherever the good news was proclaimed in all the world, what I had done would be told in remembrance of me. What I ask you to remember is not the oil but the whole story. I saw, heard, understood and believed.

Today, I ask that you do not remember the oil I poured but remember the whole story which is about Jesus of Nazareth. A man of great compassion who invites us to join him in creating a new world order where peace and justice and love are the guiding principles; where all of earth's children are held and healed and empowered.

What I did for him so many years ago I offer now to you. You, too, have been chosen and consecrated as beloved children of God. You also need healing and strength for the journey. I invite you now, to come forward for anointing.

## Jesus Prays for Unity

My name is Mary. You will know me best as the sister of Martha and Lazarus. I spent much time in the company of Jesus both inside and outside our home. What I loved most about him was the way he made me feel as an important part of his ministry. He included all of us in his teachings and he encouraged me to grow and seek understanding. He broke down the barriers of race, religion, gender, economic status and helped us to see that each person is a beloved child of God. How many times he angered those in power with his teachings! Even some closest to him wondered about his actions on occasion. I remember the day he stood up for the woman who was about to be stoned and challenged those without sin to cast the first stone; and the day he spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, breaking barriers of both religion and gender. Then there was the time that a woman confronted him asking for care and in their back and forth she was able to help him see differently and he did. I think about the story he told of the Good Samaritan holding an outsider up as an example for how we should behave. Even the simple things like talking to the diseased and the outcast; blessing the children; picking grain on the Sabbath so that we could be fed.... All of these things helped us to see a world of equality and justice marked with care and compassion – a place where we lived in right relationship with all.

The final week of his life – and I don't know if he knew exactly what was going to happen but he did know that he needed to make a statement and that it would bring consequences – he tried to really imprint his dream upon our hearts and minds, in a way he had not done before and with a certain sense of urgency. He wanted us to know the possibilities and be empowered to stand up for what was right and just and true.

One of the things that he did regularly and encouraged us to do was pray. To take that time to tap into the spirit and renew our souls. To pray with each other, for each other and for the world in which we lived. During that final week – after the parade into the city, after his scene in the temple, after his anointing but before the full reality of the situation rested upon us, again he prayed.

In that moment, connected to a power that is difficult to explain his words touched the core of my being. He prayed for understanding, knowledge, peace and courage. He prayed that we might walk faithfully and be united in purpose and in truth. As he prayed, I felt those words resting on me and indeed on all of us - not just as a prayer but as a commissioning. We had been chosen, consecrated and now we were being sent out in his name.

The prayer that night was not just for us – in his words

“It was for all who would come to believe.”

That means you! You are here because we told the story, we were faithful witnesses. Jesus' prayer is that you too will walk in his way and be united as one.



## **Washing the Disciples feet**

My name is Salome. In the stories you share, my name is only used once as one of the women present at the tomb. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and I brought spices to the tomb so that we might prepare Jesus body as was the custom of our faith. When we arrived, the stone to the tomb had been rolled away and we were told to go and tell the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee. We were amazed and frightened and uncertain. But I am getting ahead of myself. I was among those who walked with Jesus for a couple of years by this time. I listened to his teachings, shared with him around the table and witnessed his care and compassion for all. I'd like to share with you today what happened the night before he was crucified. Tensions had been mounting for some time and that final week Jesus seemed more determined than ever before. Many of us were worried. It seemed like he was going out of his way to tick off the authorities and there was no doubt in our minds that this would not end well. Jesus wanted us to see the world the way that God intended – a place of justice and peace; a place where barriers were no more and people walked side by side. This frightened some, especially those in positions of power. For those of us who followed him, his vision spoke to the longings of our souls and gave us reason to hope for a brighter future.

At the beginning of the week we arrived in Jerusalem for the festival of Passover. Having determined the place and preparing it, on Thursday night we arrived as family to share in the sacred meal of our people. During the meal we would light the candles, tell the stories of our journey from slavery into freedom and the hope for the coming day of restoration. We knew the ritual well. However, as with most things with Jesus, there were moments of insight and wonder.

The room was ready and as we entered, we were met by Jesus. In his hand was a basin and a towel. That was when the most amazing thing happened. Something that spoke louder than any spoken word and that touched each of us in a different way. Jesus knelt in front of each of us and washed our feet, wiping away the dirt and grime of the journey. I can still feel the presence of the spirit that filled the room that night. His gentle touch told me of his love and compassion. Many times he had spoken about his leadership being different, that it was about servanthood and now I think I finally understood.

Jesus was concerned about each individual and he empowered us all to be all that we were created to be. Just in case we didn't get it, as had been the situation on other occasions, this time Jesus said "Do you know what I have done?" Then he went on to answer the question himself "I have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you."

It was as if he were passing the mantle on to us. The time had come for us to do as he had done – share power, put the needs of others first and help all who cross our path to perform

to their full potential.

Although that night we did not know fully what this would look like, we, by our presence accepted his commission. We took up his ministry in the weeks and years ahead and we tried our best to live into his dream. For generations now, this ministry has been passed from one to the other which leads us to this day. As the hands and feet and voice of Jesus, I invite you now to hold the bowl and wash the hands of the person sitting next to you. As you do remember his words

“What I have done for you, you ought to do for one another”

May you feel his presence, hear his voice and know his gift to you. May you, this take up the mantle and continue to live into his dream.

## Good Friday

My name is Mary. Most of you will know me as the mother of Jesus. The story I share is Jesus' story. It is also mine and it is yours. It is a story of joy and sorrow, love and hate, freedom and oppression, hope and promise, life and death. It began 33 years ago in a stable when our baby breathed his first breath. I remember it well and I remember the moment I understood that my child's life would be different. After the normal blessing, Simeon, the priest, did the unexpected when he turned to me and said "this child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but he will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. A sword will pierce through your own soul also."

Although I did not know exactly what the future would bring, I knew in my heart that it would not be easy. I stood beside my son, embraced his call and walked the road that led us to this day. At points, it has been heart breaking, at others challenging, but it has always been filled with amazing grace. He gave humanity a vision and called us all to a new way of life. He gave us hope and with it the promise that beyond the darkness there will be new life.

This vision burned in our hearts and filled our beings with possibility. Those with ears to hear and eyes to see left their places of comfort and safety and walked with him. He taught us the Divine melody and we sang "Hallelujah"!

In the words he spoke and through the way he lived, Jesus transformed lives. He opened doors to a new understanding and challenged abuse and oppression. As with all things in life, his words and actions brought consequences. People do not like change and those in power do not like to have their authority questioned. Jesus had, many times, angered the secular and religious leaders, and they wanted him silenced. On the day we approached Jerusalem for the festival of Passover, I knew in my heart that this would not be a normal celebration. Fear filled my soul. Jesus was focused and determined in a way that I had not seen before. For three years he had preached justice, love, and new life. Many listened, yet they still didn't quite get it. When we stopped outside the city, he sent two disciples ahead to find a donkey. I suspected that he was setting the stage to make a statement that the world would not soon forget. And I was right!

In the stories of our faith it is recorded that the prophet Zechariah said "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you. He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey. Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. He will speak peace to the nations and his dominion will be from sea to sea."

By entering the city in this manner, all who knew the story would know what Jesus was proclaiming. By this action he was definitely pushing boundaries. I knew the consequences would be severe. He was a threat to all who sat in seats of power and they would not stand for it.

We proceeded into the city. There was an air of celebration paired with an underlying tension and a definite statement that the revolution had now begun!

From parade to temple, we had been here many times. Three years before Jesus stood in the temple and proclaimed from the book of the prophet Isaiah, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty all those who are oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." With these words he laid out his mission and ministry. Today, though, would not be about words. The time had come for concrete action. On this day the tables would be turned and the doors opened to allow all earth's children to enter.

The world in which we live had become something other than what had been intended. Darkness and shadows lurked around every corner and the beauty of creation had grown dim. Jesus had a vision, a dream of a different way and a new creation. Everything that he said and did was designed to bring this new world into being. His dream became my dream and that of many others. We believed he could help us to bring the vision from thought to reality.

Often times along the way, Jesus wondered if people really understood what he was trying to do. Still, he continued to share, to teach, and to touch the world. In what would be his final week of life, I think he knew the time was growing short to do what needed to be done. One can only defy power so long before power pushes back. Yet, he was committed and believed with his entire being that this dream could become a way of life and that the world could be transformed. We came to understand that it was not Jesus alone who would make this happen. It would be all of us together, living as he showed us.

When the time had come to celebrate Passover, tensions were high among us. Jesus had been creating quite a stir! There were rumblings that he had gone too far and the authorities wanted now to end his life. Those of us closest to him were worried and we did not come to this Passover meal with joy.

A room had been secured and everything prepared. We each made our way there with the heaviness of the journey and of this week resting in our souls. We entered the room and were met by Jesus who held in his hand a basin of water and a towel. He knelt before each of us, with gentleness and care, and washed the grime from our feet. In that moment, the weight of the journey was lifted and there was the sense that each of us was being consecrated and claimed. It was a simple act that spoke volumes. We would remember this in the days to come. It would remind us of how we should treat each other, and it provided the spiritual food we'd need for the living of these days.

Throughout his life Jesus drew on the power of Divine to feed his soul and give direction to his life. Whether it had been a draining day or a day filled with joy, whether he was faced with a difficult decision or a situation in need of clarification; or sometimes just because, Jesus would leave the crowds and the routine to find a place of quiet where he could tap into the energy of the universe. After the Passover meal he withdrew again to that place. In the garden, alone with his thoughts and

surrounded by the holy, he poured out his fears, struggles, and uncertainties. He knew that tempers were flaring and that he had angered many. He needed strength to face whatever was coming. In the end, he walked from the garden to face his enemies. He knew that he had done what needed to be done and it was right and good.

I knew the peace that comes from being in the presence of the Divine. I knew its power and its effect upon the soul. I taught Jesus to pray just as my mother taught me and Jesus taught his followers. It is important and essential to take the time to step away from whatever is happening – to move into that space of Divine connection. In that place we can pour out all that lies in our hearts. We can unite our energy with the energy of the universe to effect change, light and love.

Let us pause in our remembering to go now to our garden – breathe deeply the breath of life. Open your mind and heart and soul to feel the spirit that moves among us. *(move into a time of prayer)*

One of the most difficult things for a mother is to see her child suffer. As much as I supported him in his decisions and stood beside him in his ministry, I longed for things to be different. I wanted to see him settled, married, with children of his own and to watch him grow old. I was so proud of him, though. He stood up for his beliefs. He spoke out, risked, and would not bow to power. He changed life for so many – the sick, the poor, the widowed, children, the rich and the privileged. He turned the world upside down.

When he left the garden, he met his enemies; he was arrested, tried and convicted amidst the angry cries. I did not want to bury my son but that is what I would have to do. Jesus, however, lit a fire that could not be extinguished.

What his enemies failed to understand was that killing him would not kill what he started. They believed that as he died so too would the dream, but love cannot be silenced.

I stood at the foot of the cross that day on Calvary's hill and wept. When they pierced his side, the sword pierced my soul and Simeon's words rang in my ears. Even then, Jesus spoke with gentleness and care. He treated his enemies with dignity and love. As he drew his final breath, darkness covered the land and universe cried in anguish. In that moment I could see his dream. I knew that it had been planted deep in the soil of our souls and it would not die. Beyond the darkness, there is a ray of light – Divine amazing grace.

## Easter Sunday

My name is Mary. Most of you know me as the mother of Jesus. The story that I tell you is Jesus' story. But it is also mine and it is yours. It began 33, 34, years ago when I discovered that I was pregnant. I remember it well and the feelings of uncertainty. As I wandered in the fields with only my thoughts, trying to figure out what I would do, I felt on the wind the voice of Divine. I knew that everything would be okay somehow. Then when my child was born the voice of Divine on the breeze was like angels singing, announcing to the world his birth. This is a story of hope and promise, joy and sorrow, oppression and freedom, life, death and life beyond death.

This past week has been particularly difficult as we walked the road that would lead to his death. As a mother I stood beside him and I was truly proud of him. But my heart ached as I watched him push the boundaries. His convictions ran deep and he was committed to the Divine, determined to touch the world in such a way that it would be transformed. He brought light and love and opened doors of possibility, calling all earth's children to a new way of life. Such actions, such words, however, brought fear. Fear of change and difference. People would need to relinquish power and position and stand side by side to make his dream reality. It was more than some could take. So tempers flared. In an effort to maintain the status quo the crowds did the unthinkable. He was arrested, tried and convicted in a matter of hours. Crucifixion! The mobs cried and it was so.

I watched as my son was beaten then made to carry his cross through the streets to Calvary. On that hill, just outside the town, they nailed his hands and his feet and pierced his side believing that this would be the end.

When Joseph of Arimathea took him from the cross and laid him in the tomb I followed behind and watched as the stone was put in place. In the hours since then I have cried and screamed and poured out my heart wondering why! Why would the crowds turn on him, after he had touched so many of their lives? Why would people think that killing someone was the right way to deal with a different voice? The last three years gone up in smoke and for what? I could not contain my anguish!

This morning, with several of my sisters, we walked again to the tomb. It was dark when we left and just as we arrived the sun was rising. That is when it happened!! As the darkness began to disappear in the light of a new day, what it revealed was amazing! The stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. At first we thought that someone had come in the night and stolen his body and again I cried out to the Divine. Then, just as it had happened 34 years ago, I could feel the spirit moving and on the breath of the wind came a message of hope and promise and new life.

"He is not here!! He is Risen!"

And I knew deep in my soul that his dream did not die, this was not the end, for death cannot contain the spirit!