

THE

WOMAN

AND

THE

CAVE

**A Lenten Prayer Journey with
the Apostle to the Apostles**



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INTRODUCTION

*I*t all started with a vision. I believe we are all given visions at various points in our lifetime, we just have to be open enough to really see them within our souls. This is not the first vision I've had, nor will it be the last. Visions don't come when we want them to, when we ask for them, or even if we plan for it. Visions come when God wants, when God believes us ready to witness, and when God truly calls each of us individually and in a way that only we comprehend. Some people are attuned to this call, some people are waiting for it, and some haven't seen what's been before them this whole time.

A friend reached out to me about a project she's working on for her master's program. She asked if I was familiar with Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. To be honest, Athenian philosophy is far above my level of intellectual understanding, but I dove in headfirst because something inside of me was burning a red-hot flame of fiery revelation. She asked me to be a part of her project, bringing my experience as a visual artist and giving a creative voice to her ensemble discussion group. What I discovered in our time together is that the Saints were flowing through my words, my mind, my breath, my heart, and my soul (not just through my hands as I was already writing icons). At one point, each of us was asked where our inner voices came from at that moment and my immediate response was "Mary Magdalene." We had one particular discussion where we were asked what color represents our "voice," my answer, "RED." As I came to better understand the Cave and Plato's explanation of it, I saw a complete and beautiful vision before me. I didn't ask for it, it certainly didn't come at the most convenient time, either way, it was a gift. I closed my eyes and sat at my computer, hurriedly typing out the words of what I saw: a first-person account of Mary Magdalene and the Last Supper through the Resurrection with a flashback when she first met Jesus and he healed her. And guess what? Jesus' tomb was deep within a CAVE (see the theme here?). I saw Mary outside of the cave, within the cave, leaving the cave, and returning to the cave (for those of you familiar with Plato's Cave, you will understand this better). I've held these words and this experience close to me these last few months; not quite ready to share for fear of being misunderstood and

misinterpreted. But Mary Magdalene shed the cloak of fear when she followed Jesus, when she knelt before his feet at the cross, and when she went into that cave to tend to his body. So, I am shedding that same cloak and sharing this story with you on your own *Lenten Journey* in hopes it will ignite the kindling in your own soul and set the creative spirit in all of us aflame. And if I failed miserably, as often as we creatives think we do, then hey, it was worth the try.

My hope for this *Lenten Journey* is that it will provide you with some tools to better understand your own visions, your own call, and maybe even help you recognize what's been in front of you this whole time. Sometimes we just need a little inspiration, a little creative help, and a little dash (or a lot!) of the Holy Spirit to get us moving. You don't have to be an artist, a writer, or even a creative-minded person to use this toolkit (nor do you have to understand Athenian Philosophy!), this is meant for everyone, no matter your skills or area of interest. So, get that all that self-doubt out of your head right now before we get started, ok?

“Anyone who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light”

– Plato, *The Allegory of the Cave*



APOSTOLA APOSTOLORUM

She is the Apostle to the Apostles, follower of Jesus, woman, companion, and the first witness. Her name, as we know her, Mary Magdalene. While I believe we will never know the true story of Mary; how she lived before meeting Jesus, how she carried Jesus' ministry after his death, where she lived, and how she died, we can come to our own conclusions on the kind of person she was, the kind of friend and disciple she was, the kind of woman she was. And through her story, we see Jesus and his risk-taking of ancient times in even speaking to a woman in public, let alone taking on a disciple of the opposite sex without intention to marry. There are so many things we could unpack here, but I will leave it to the books that have already been written and your own interpretation of the information presented (there is a list of great [book suggestions](#) at the end of this *Lenten Journey*).

Mary, as I understand her, is a strong and devout woman who struggled with the visions set before her. But when she let that internal fire burn, it never stopped. Her experience as THE witness allowed her soul to set the world aflame. I can see her ministering to people in the wilderness and carrying Jesus' ministry across the land. I can see people questioning her, questioning her visions, questioning her very spirit. And I can see her smiling through all of it and responding with a nod of understanding.

As a hopeful future Deacon in the Episcopal Church (I start seminary this fall!) who also happens to be a woman, I can say that Mary is an absolute inspiration. I think so many people forget that it all started with a woman. That serving "out in the world" and "ministering to the people" who didn't know Jesus personally all happened BECAUSE of a woman. I hope you can carry her story with you in your own way and allow her to awaken a flame within you too.

Activity: I invite you to learn more about Mary's true story, or what you believe to be her story. Read the **books I have shared** at the end of this *Lenten Journey*, look up articles and blogs online, watch documentaries and films. What did you discover? Did anything change your mind about Mary and the legacy of ministry she carried after Jesus' death? Write down in a journal what stands out for you and what changed. Check out the **Recommendations** section for some suggestions on reading.



THE WOMAN AND THE CAVE

I inhaled the scent of myrrh flowing from the depths of the cave as I held up my torch to turn the corner. The sweet aroma that covered his shroud floated through the air, masking any stench of death and decay. My heart pounded louder and louder as I stood at the corner where the breach in the cave's walls opened and I closed my eyes. I didn't know what I was going to find. The stone was moved when we came here to his tomb. Who moved it? Was someone tending to his body on this day it was our turn? Did someone take him away? My God, what has happened here.

I couldn't open my eyes, I was too afraid, afraid of what I might see. I stood there in complete stillness and silence with a flipbook of memories flashing in my mind.

I remember the day he came to me. I was in so much pain, my body rejected every remedy I so desperately sought after in my own time of need. I could walk, eat, and drink so everyone thought I was fine. No one could see the pain, so they assumed it didn't exist. But the pain resonated through my entire body, and I wasn't ok. Because of the violent words and actions against me, my mind hurt too. I didn't want to live anymore. I carried the weight of that pain and the feeling of not wanting to go on with such force, that my mind slowly started to slip away. That's when I had the vision. I knew of Jesus and that he was healing people. I knew if there was any chance for me, it was through him. He came to me in a dream, he walked right up to me, laid his hands on me, and I was free. A few days passed after this vivid image. I was at the well gathering a supply of water when my whole world changed. I lifted the pail to my shoulders and nearly cried out as my shoulder popped. I closed my eyes in hopes of some relief when I felt a soft touch at my waist. I knew it was him. Tears poured from my face and onto the sand like a flowing waterfall filling a dry, empty valley. As if in slow motion, the pail fell from my painful grasp and the water poured out, adding to the puddle forming at my feet. I fell to my knees and looked up with foggy eyes to the sight and sounds of so many people laughing and gasping at my very public actions. He placed his right hand underneath my knotted knuckles and looked down at me. He lifted

my chin with his left hand to meet his gaze. He said, “you will never look down again my dear friend, raise your eyes to me. With the power of God, my own Father, I heal you of the burdens of your own mind, body, heart, and spirit. My sweet child, your pain is gone, as I carry it for you now, it will no longer burden your soul.” I closed my eyes once more, taking in the sounds and smells of that moment, knowing my life and everything before me would be different from that moment on and I wanted to relish in it. My tears transformed from pain to gladness and relief. I took a deep breath, inhaling the cleanest breath of fresh air and filling my lungs completely, something I never had the strength to do before. As I exhaled, my eyes met his; they were so warm and golden, they seemed to have their own light source shining from within. He smiled that crooked corner smile he always had, saying so much without a word spoken. He took both of my hands and helped me rise, I never looked down. I couldn’t look away from his kind eyes as he slowly closed them and took a deep breath and exhaled. My pain died that day, I gave it a soul and he took that soul to heaven for me, burying it deep within him as he did for everyone he healed. I followed him closely from that moment on and made sure that he never had to worry about the weight of his ministry.

I opened my eyes at the cave’s corner again, the silhouette of my torch playing tricks on me, the flickering flame dancing across the stone surface like shadow puppets telling the story of how we all got here but can’t leave, chained to the walls. I closed my eyes once more, the flipbook of memories kicking in and rushing me back to the week before, which seems like an eternity ago.

The flame of the candles quivered in the evening air, shaking about much like our erratic heartbeats and the anxious breath we all carried that night. The 12 of us gathered around the table, hanging onto his words like we were gasping for air at the surface of the river. My heart pounded just as hard as it is here in this cave. We knew he had to die in order to live for all of us, but we just couldn’t take hold of the idea that his body wouldn’t be there in front of us every moment. His hand trembled when he held the cup of wine and presented it to us as his blood. No one else noticed, but I did. He knew he was going to die a horribly painful death and he was scared too. That’s what people don’t tell you, he was human, of course he was scared. I don’t care how brave you are, how called you are, if you know you’re going to die, a piece of you breaks as your soul stands in waiting.

I ate the bread and drank the wine, tears filling my eyes as he turned to me in the moonlight peeking through the cracks in the window. He put his hand under my chin once more, pulling my face towards his and smiled that crooked corner smile saying, “never look down, for you will lift so many people up.” His mouth closed and my whole world fell silent. I stared at his solaced face, but I continued to hear his voice speaking to me, and only to me. I surveyed the room to make sure I wasn’t dreaming. Looking back at him, eyes closed softly, I heard him say “I am speaking to you Mary. You will be the first. You will be the first witness to my resurrection. You were always the first. They won’t believe you, you will have to show them, and they still won’t believe you. Even centuries from now, they still won’t believe you. But you must know that it was always you, it will always begin with you, a woman, the only woman close to me aside from my own mother. You see in me something that the others do not. You see that I am feminine and masculine. You see the mother and the father. You see God in a way that no one else will and you will spend the rest of your life here and in heaven encouraging others to see your vision too. Wipe your tears, not because I am ashamed, your tears are like gold and honey, but wipe them to stay strong for those around you. I know it’s hard being a woman in this world, but I need you to take those tears and save them, use them to bathe by body, when you visit me, anoint my body in your tears.” He slowly opened his eyes, seeing the astonished look on my face, and nodded. I nodded back and wiped the tears filling my eyes and streaming down my face.

Then I woke to find the sweaty hands of his mother Mary next to me. We were at the cross and wept at his feet nailed to the rough wood. So much happened and it was all a muddy blur of remembrances. How did we get here? Wasn’t it just yesterday he smiled at me so softly, reassuring me of my place in this ministry? Now I am at his dirty, stained feet, covered in earth, and salt, and blood. I touched his side as he came down, in the same spot he touched me at the well seemingly so long ago. I brushed across his ribcage and felt each one, so pronounced, so bruised and battered and bloody from the stab wounds.

We immediately went to work cleansing his body, doing what needed to be done. We buried him in this cave, a place given to us by a humble man. Wrapped in a clean white shroud, myrrh dripping along the fabric, its sweet scent filled the cave’s solitary room. The light of our torches cast strange shadows on the wall, shadows of the thousands of souls saved by

his death. My heart ached for him, my soul felt simultaneously lifted to the heavens and ripped from my very ribcage all at once.

The days in between that moment and where I'm standing right now are hazy. There was so much persecution and hateful words in the grisly death of him. So many boastful he was gone, yet so many honored he existed as a human being. All those words and emotions are swirling around me now as I await to turn this corner, their echoes and whispers clinging to the air like haunting music.

Today is my day to cleanse. I have all but forgotten the words he spoke to me the night we ate bread and drank wine together for the last time: "I am speaking to you Mary; you will be the first." I can hear these words echoing through the cave. But today is supposed to be my turn to spend time with his body alone, to talk to him after everything that has happened. We took the long dirt trail, lit by a fraction of sunrise as it broke the surface of the earth, to gather spices and more myrrh at the market. Then we headed to the stone entrance where we last left him and discovered the large stone was moved. I ignored all logic and ran inside, torch blazing. I felt the walls of the cave, like the embossment of his ribs when he came down off the cross. My fingers dragged along the stone surface so hard that dust fell to the ground in place of the tears he told me not to shed anymore. And now here I am, stopped in my tracks at the corner of this desolate and dark room where I last saw his wounded body, and I'm barely able to open my eyes, trying not to crumble to the floor like a demolished building.

Lifting my torch around the corner and preparing for what I would find, I expected to see the shadow of his body lying there in the muslin shroud, but only that sweet smell of myrrh followed. I turned the corner and gasped, completely in shock. I fell to my knees and tried not to cry out, just like that day at the well, because I KNEW. My mind and all logic told me that someone must have broken in and taken his lifeless body away, never to be seen again, but my heart and soul told me otherwise.

I remember how I held him; I held his hand when he healed me, I held it again when we laid his body here before we wrapped him in the shroud. His eyes were kind and loving, the wave of peace and serenity that he left in a room when calm and prayerful is something that sticks to you,

its palpable, like a strong perfume that sits in the air with a thickness you can taste, sickly sweet.

The lightness in my heart is floating me off my knees and through the air now. I'm running, running as fast as I can through this maze back to the entrance where my friends are waiting. We ran to Peter. I fell at his knees like I fell to Jesus when he healed me, but Peter looked down at me and didn't believe the words coming out of my mouth. "What do you mean his body isn't there? What happened? Who did this?" We all ran back to the cave, the tomb buried deep within its walls. I knew if they saw this vision with their own eyes, they would believe me, I would believe me. But they became angry his body was desecrated and stolen, fleeing back to the town, and leaving me there to weep at the place where his shroud lay limp on the dirt floor, the smell of myrrh ascending into my nostrils and reminding me of his suffering and death. I ran out of the darkness and into the light of the blazing afternoon. It seemed brighter than usual; the whole sky was like staring directly into the sun. I looked to my left and saw the gardener standing there, tending to the colorful wildflowers that had so swiftly grown outside of the cave on this third day. He started to speak to me and asked "woman, why are you crying?" My heart skipped a beat at the sound of his voice, seemingly so familiar. My eyes were playing tricks on me, still dancing around in the darkness frolicking with silhouettes of memories. As I was blinded by the sunlight, white dots looked like angels fluttering in my peripherals.

The gardener stepped closer to me. He closed his eyes and smiled a familiar crooked smile. Without moving his lips, he said "I am here Mary." Then he opened his eyes, took my hands in his and said out loud "Remember, I chose you." In that moment, my whole world came swirling back around me, the light of heaven became so blinding I fell to my knees once more at the sight of it. But I still couldn't look away. I saw an angel flapping her wings, she fluttered there softly, gently, light emanating from within. He has risen. "Rabboni?," I said. An all too familiar nod followed.



BIBLE VERSES

“*N*ow hurry, go and tell his disciples, ‘He’s been raised from the dead. He’s going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.’ I’ve given the message to you.”

Matthew 28:7

“*J*esus said to her, ‘Don’t hold on to me, for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, I’m going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

John 20:17

“*H*e died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised.”

2 Corinthians 5:15

“*S*oon afterward, Jesus traveled through the cities and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of God’s kingdom. The Twelve were with him, along with some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses. Among them were Mary Magdalene (from whom seven demons had been thrown out), Joanna (the wife of Herod’s servant Chuza), Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.”

Luke 8:1-3

“*S*ome women were watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James (the younger one) and Joses, and Salome.”

Mark 15:40

“Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.”

Matthew 27:56

“Jesus’ mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood near the cross.”

John 19:25

“Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was buried.”

Mark 15:47

“Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting in front of the tomb.”

Matthew 27:61

“After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb.”

Matthew 28:1

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus’ dead body.”

Mark 16:1

“Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.”

John 20:1

“After Jesus rose up early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.”

Mark 16:9

“Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” Then she told them what he said to her.”

John 20:18

“Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. They didn’t know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them in gleaming bright clothing. The women were frightened and bowed their faces toward the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He isn’t here, but has been raised. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Human One must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words. When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn’t believe the women. But Peter ran to the tomb. When he bent over to look inside, he saw only the linen cloth. Then he returned home, wondering what had happened.”

Luke 24: 1-12

Activity: What word or phrase stands out to you the most in these passages? I invite you to use some markers or whatever you have handy and draw the word or phrase. Write it out on a piece of paper really big and spend time doodling around it and filling it in with color.



PRAYERS TO MARY

*S*aint Mary Magdalene, woman of many sins, who by conversion became the beloved of Jesus, thank you for your witness that Jesus forgives through the miracle of love. You, who already possess eternal happiness in His glorious presence, please intercede for me, so that some day I may share in the same everlasting joy. Amen.

*L*ord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us. Saint Mary Magdalene, pray for us.

Who from Jesus received the pardon of thy sins, pray for us.

Who before darkness wast restored to light, pray for us.

Mirror of penance, pray for us. Disciple of Our Lord, pray for us.

Wounded with the love of Christ, pray for us.

Most dear to the Heart of Jesus, pray for us.

Constant woman, pray for us.

Thou who didst keep watch beneath the cross, pray for us.

Thou who wast the first to see Jesus risen, pray for us.

Whose forehead was sanctified by the touch of thy risen Master, pray for us.

Apostle of the apostles, pray for us.

Who didst choose the "better part," pray for us.

Who lived for many years in solitude being miraculously fed, pray for us.

Who wast visited by angels seven times a day, pray for us.

Sweet advocate of sinners, pray for us.

Saint Mary Magdalene, earnestly intercede for us with thy Divine Master,

That we may share thy happiness in heaven.

*L*et us pray. May the glorious merits of blessed Mary Magdalene, we beseech Thee, O Lord, make our offerings acceptable to Thee, for Thine only-begotten Son vouchsafed graciously to accept the humble service she

rendered. Who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, God for ever and ever. Amen.

O lamp of the world and gleaming pearl, who by announcing Christ's resurrection merited to become the "Apostle of the Apostles," Mary Magdalen, be ever our loving advocate with God who has chosen you.

With Mary Magdalene and all holy women, let us praise our God and call upon him in prayer. Father, your Son said of the woman who was a sinner,
'Her many sins are forgiven because she has loved much.'
Forgive the sins of all who love you and strengthen your Church to show forth your love in today's world.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Many women ministered to the needs of your Son on his saving journeys. Open our eyes to see you in those in need or sickness and hear our prayer for ... and all those we hold before you.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

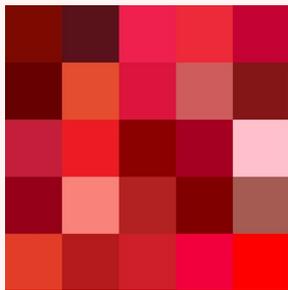
Mary Magdalene was the first to greet your risen Son and carried the news of his triumph over death to the disciples. Strengthen us to be faithful witnesses to the gospel in the world and grant your grace to all who preach and teach the faith.
Lord, hear us.
Lord, graciously hear us.

Your Son called those who do your will his brother and sister and mother. Teach us to live as members of one family, united in faith and love.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

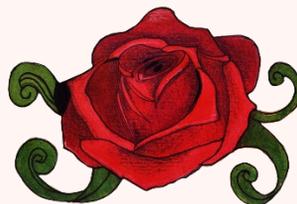
Joining in fellowship with Mary Magdalene and all your saints, we thank you for ... recently departed, and all those who have gone before us in the faith. Grant that with them we may see your Son face to face in everlasting glory. Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE COLOR RED

“Red is the bleeding heart. It’s the blood that ran down his face from the crown of thorns they pushed so far into his skin. Red is the wine in the cup we all shared and drank from that night. It’s the Nile River that Moses turned to blood in front of his own brother in the first plague of Egypt all those centuries ago. Red is the tears that Mother Mary shed asking God why she had to suffer the torture of losing her son and witnessing his tragic death. It’s the color of our clothes, the color of my lips when they kissed his cheek. Red is the color that unites us all. for no matter what we look like on the outside, we are of the same color on the inside. Red is love because Jesus is love. his body covered in blood when he came off the cross, dying for all our sins and carrying our pain with him to heaven when he resurrected.”
(from my own meditation on Mary Magdalene)



Activity: I invite you to meditate on the color RED. How does it appear to you? (If you need help, maybe find a red object in your house that you can focus on.) Is it a bright and burning red, like fire? Is it a soft red, like the inner pedals of a rose? Is it a crimson red, like the dark edges of a sunset? Describe the shades of red you see in words or in a picture. What does this mean for you? Where has the color red appeared in your life in ways you can remember? What does the color red make you think of? How does this shade of red you’ve pictured affect your mood?



ICONOGRAPHY

When a close friend of mine commissioned the Mary Magdalene icon, I explained my process and that I'm usually surprised what comes up in my studies and meditations. I knew that her understanding of Mary came from the standard interpretation; that she was a prostitute healed of "seven demons" and wiped Jesus' feet with her tears and her hair. And frankly, that is all I knew as well. When I shared (after studying her for two weeks straight) that our highly misunderstood grasp of Mary's story came from an oversimplified sermon by Pope Gregory the Great, who took several stories of Mary's from the bible and combined them into one, we both shook our heads - because of course her story got lost in the sea of other "Mary's." Let's face it, in the 6th century, women were just not on the same level as men (and we're STILL working on it).

I discovered it was more likely Mary was independently wealthy and helped fund Jesus' ministry. I could feel my friend's weight of disappointment after feeling such a connection to the Mary she thought she knew, the Mary we all thought we knew. I invited her to think of Mary in this new and unique way; a strong and powerful woman of her time who was effectively and posthumously "demoted" by the church because of her sex, but carried Jesus' ministry far and wide after his human body was gone from this earth. I saw the disappointment fade and a newfound excitement and inspiration appear. THAT became the reason I knew I was called to create this icon and tell Mary's story. And to this day, my friend and I still gravitate to Mary's story when we get together. She's a profound force in both of our lives.

Activity: I invite you to meditate on the Mary Magdalene icon below. How is she speaking to you? What do her eyes convey? Write down some descriptive words that come to mind when you're meditating on the icon.





MEDITATIVE WRITING

*M*editative writing doesn't have to be a scary concept if you've never offered yourself a chance to experience it. You don't have to be a professional or have an English degree. No one is going to correct your spelling (hey, even Stephen King can't spell!) or be the grammar police here. I never even considered meditative writing until I had the vision with *The Woman and the Cave*. I just wanted to pass along what I learned so that others could open themselves up to it.

Make yourself a comfortable space. Do you want to write by hand in a journal? Do you want to type on your computer? Do you want to dictate to Siri? Whatever makes you most at ease, even if it's at your computer desk like I did, just make it comfy. Burn a candle (please be safe!), light some incense, put on some soft music, talk to God. Allow yourself time for silence and listening. Once we can listen, we can see.

Activity: Now that you've had time to process *The Woman and the Cave*, I invite you into your own meditative writing. You can write while meditating or write after your meditation. You're welcome to use the icon to focus on if you'd like. But the point of this exercise is to let your mind and body relax as much as possible and allow your senses to be heightened. You may even want to listen to a guided meditation online or meditative music to help you. What did you see? What colors came to your mind as you were meditating? What, if any, visions made themselves known? Who did you think about? Use a journal and write down anything that you experienced, or even draw it if you feel so called.



CREATIVE PRAYER

There are so many creative ways to pray that I could write a whole book about it or teach a series of classes (foretelling of the future? Maybe!). But I am going to share some easy and active ways to pray that you can do from home by yourself or with your family. I invite you to use these techniques as you meditate and pray during this Lent season and beyond.

Activity: One of my favorite ways to pray is *Praying in Color* (see book by Sybil Macbeth). It is a quiet but active prayer for those, like me, that find it hard to sit still and close your eyes every time. You can even start a creative prayer journal to collect all your creative prayers in one place! Anyone can doodle; start by drawing some shapes on a piece of paper. Now write inside the shapes someone you are praying for or something you are praying about. You can even add your thanksgivings and God moments too. Once you have them all written down, now you can start doodling! The point is that as you are spending time drawing and writing, this is praying. When you concentrate on the words in that shape, you are actively praying.



Activity: Another favorite way to pray is what I call “prayer stones.” You can collect a few stones from outside your own house or from a local park that speak to you. Take them home and use some acrylic craft paint and cover them. You can draw designs or just paint colors and let your hand take the brush where it wants to go. As you are painting your prayer stones, think about prayers you want to send out into the world; peace, forgiveness, kindness, loving thy neighbor, etc. You can even write some words on your stones once the paint is dry. When they are all done, find a local park or area where people like to take walks or pass by and leave them out in the open where a stranger can discover your prayer stone and either take it with them or leave it and admire it. The point is that you sent your prayers out into the world in a creative way to be witnessed by strangers who might need them more than you know.



Activity: Go to a craft store, an office supply store, or order online a decent sized journal with blank pages (better for drawing). Use some craft paint, paint markers, or whatever you have handy (always a good excuse to buy new art supplies!) and decorate the cover of your new journal. Label this journal as your “spiritual journal” and use the tools we’ve shared in this *Lenten Journey* to fill the pages. Or save what you’ve created so far in here too. I highly recommend getting a set of colorful sharpies, this is always my go-to! Have fun with it and make it totally unique, just like you.



Activity: You've probably seen that red egg floating around these pages and in the Mary icon I wrote. As your last activity, I invite you to learn the *story of the red egg* and why it's depicted with Mary Magdalene. Then, when you are coloring your eggs for Easter, make one of them a red egg and draw a cross on it. Now share what you learned of the egg story with your family, a friend, or a loved one.



Activity: There is an interesting story that says Mary Magdalene made her way to *Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume, France* and lived there for 30 years. To this day, the town celebrates Mary on her feast day by parading her alleged skull through the streets and venerating her. I invite you to study more about this story and write about what you find on one of your journal pages. Include drawings such as; a skull, the symbol of Mary Magdalene (a heart, anchor, and cross), a cave, and the ocean.



IN CLOSING

*M*y favorite chapter in *Mary Magdalene Revealed* by Meggan Watterson is entitled “The Red Thread.” I think I’ve gone back to read it no less than 7 times. So, in closing, I would like to invite you to find a piece of red thread somewhere; whether it’s around your home or office, or if you have to go buy some. Cut it long enough to tie around your wrist. As you look at it, let it remind you that we are all connected. We are all here to help and inspire each other. We are all inter-woven and connected by a thread that weaves between us and through us. It’s there to remind us of our past, our present, and our future. The red reminds us of the blood we share no matter the color of our skin or the nature of our sexuality and identity. It reminds us not to lose that connection or forget that it exists.

I hope that you found some useful tools in this little *Lenten Journey* I put together. Maybe you found some inspiration or creativity you didn’t know you had? Maybe it was just a good read, maybe it wasn’t at all. That’s a risk we take as writers. But it’s a risk I am willing to sacrifice as I was called to share these words and actions with all of you. My call is strong, and I’ve learned to just shut up and listen.

Remember that your visions are real. They are true. They are a gift. Don’t let anyone ever tell you otherwise. I’ve spent too much time worrying about what other people think of my experiences when I discovered it was a feeling put there to prevent me from sharing.

Let Mary dwell in your heart. Let her story and discovery flow through your breath and out into the world to inspire others. She wants that. God wants that. And most of all, remember that it’s not enough to say that we love Jesus, we have to love LIKE Jesus.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Mary Magdalene Revealed - Meggan Watterson

The Gospel of Mary Magdalene – (there are several versions out there)

The Woman with the Alabaster Jar - Margaret Starbird

Mary Magdalene - 2019 film

The Big Book of Women Saints – Sarah Gallick

Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene – Bart D. Ehrman

Secrets of Mary Magdalene – Dan Burstein and Arne J. De Keijzer

Badass Women of the Bible – Dr. Irie Lynne Session





"I hear voices telling me what to do. They come from God," Joan says. "They come from your imagination," replies Robert de Baudricourt, military chief at Vaucouleurs. "Of course," Joan retorts. "That is how the messages of God come to us."

Genuine experience can only be judged by its effect on the subject.

- DONALD SPOTO -

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Bible quotes from the *Common English Bible (CEB)*

“Prayers to Mary” is a compilation of publicly available prayers, litany, and antiphons honoring Mary Magdalene and I do not take credit for writing these beautiful pieces.

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