

Holy Saturday Cor

Imaginative Prayer

Opening Prayer

From the Byzantine Matins of Great & Holy Saturday:

“Today the one who holds all creation in his hand
is himself held in the tomb,
a rock covers the One who covered the heavens with beauty,
Life has fallen asleep,
Hades is seized with fear,
and Adam is freed from his bonds.
Glory to your work of salvation;
through it you have accomplished the eternal Sabbath rest,
and You grant us the gift of your holy resurrection.”
Amen

Opening Dialog:

Today, our Lord is in his tomb, and we mourn His death. While we know of and celebrate Christ’s resurrection, the Apostles did not have any idea of what was to happen the following morning. Scripture tells of Peter’s denial and his running away after “the cock crowed.” We also know that John was with Mary and was present during the crucifixion. We also know of the tragedy of Judas.

What we do not know is where were the apostles following Jesus’s burial? Peter fled, but to where? We can assume that John remained with Mary and comforted her, but where? What about the other apostles? We always presumed that they scattered about, terrified that the mob will come after them. What we do know is that the apostles, except for Thomas, were together on the evening of the resurrection.

What was going on?

Let us engage in “Imaginative Prayer” to imagine the apostles coming together on that Saturday – the Sabbath.

We can begin by reflecting on some prayer offered by Sister Miriam James Heidland, who presented this on Hallow’s Pray 40 Lenten prayer series:

Let’s begin by imagining what Holy Saturday must have felt like for the disciples, and Mary Magdalene especially, as the reality of the crucifixion starts to sink in. Perhaps you’ve been where the disciples are right now—in those moments after the worst thing has happened. In the aftermath of your worst fear coming true. If you’ve been there, then you know the surge of adrenaline that hits in this moment, when the tragedy is still unfolding.

We can imagine that Good Friday, while filled with anguish and grief, was at least filled with things to do. Because sometimes, that's easier. Perhaps you can picture what it would have been like to be carried along by the events of that Friday afternoon, waiting for the news or following the crowds or keeping vigil at the foot of the cross. But in the aftermath, there's just stillness. Silence. Holy Saturday offers no busy-ness to distract us from the crushing weight of grief, and the overwhelming silence of Christ's death.

I want to invite you now to imagine Mary Magdalene, alone, in the silence of that Holy Saturday. She has seen her Savior - the one who healed her, who cast out demons from her life, who gave her a new purpose - die before her eyes. His body, bruised and battered, had been taken down from the cross and hastily prepared for burial in a borrowed tomb. How she must have longed to do something. How often do we all want to do something in the wake of tragedy? It's so much easier to stay busy. And to keep moving. But no—Mary Magdalene wasn't able to do anything. She couldn't even prepare His body fully, not in the way she would have wanted. The Sabbath came quickly and in faithfulness to Jewish law, the disciples had to simply... wait, to pause, and rest.

Let us take a moment to reflect on what Mary M was thinking about when she was rushing to prepare Jesus for burial before the sundown start of the Sabbath.

Dispair

By Sister Miriam

Hallow Pray 40 22 March 2024

It's difficult to fully imagine what Judas might have felt in the aftermath of his traitorous embrace. Perhaps he never thought that things would go quite as far as they did—perhaps he had assumed that Jesus would be arrested and chastised and then let go. Perhaps he really thought that no lasting harm would come from his actions. How many of us have been led to sin by a similar path? We tell ourselves: What I'm doing isn't so bad. This one decision won't really hurt anyone. Just this one sin, this one time, and then I'll get back on track.

Or, equally as likely, perhaps Judas did know the full consequences of his betrayal that night; knew that he was handing our Lord over to be humiliated, tortured, and brutally killed. But of course, agreeing to a deal in the abstract and seeing those consequences played out in real life are two very different things. It would seem that Judas, happy as he was to take the silver pieces in exchange for Christ's life, was abruptly faced with the reality of his decision. The man he had called Rabbi. Savior. Lord.

Dragged away in the dead of night. Treated like a common criminal. Condemned to die a torturous, terrible death. Perhaps seeing the events unfold in real time drove home for Judas the irrevocable, terrible price of his decision.

Imagine Judas early on the morning of Good Friday, watching from the crowd as the chief priests handed Christ over to Pilate to be crucified. It's in this moment that Matthew tells us that Judas was overcome with remorse. Friends, who among us hasn't made a decision we later felt shame about? If you're able to, imagine that wave of guilt that swept over Judas. The sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. The way his mouth turned dry and chest tightened with despair. Those thirty pieces of silver he carried—no longer a handsome reward. The clang of the coins as he walked a constant condemnation.

How often have you been there, standing where Judas stood in the aftermath of a terrible, hurtful, sinful choice? Have you experienced the dreadful desire to change what has already been decided, desperately trying to undo what could not be undone.

Let us take a few moments to privately reflect on those times where we felt that we were "in a box that we could not get out of."

Denial

Elsewhere in the crowd, we know that Peter, once so boastful in his loyalty to Christ, finds himself denying Jesus again.

And again.

And again.

The bravado he'd shown in the weeks and months leading up to Christ's Passion were nowhere to be found when Jesus was marched before the chief priests and condemned. Just as Christ had predicted, when faced with the reality of being arrested and executed, Peter's courage fails him.

When the rooster crows at sunrise on Friday morning, Peter meets the gaze of our Lord across the courtyard and is overcome with shame. Shame in his cowardice, in his human sinfulness and weakness, in his denial of the one he professed to serve. Luke describes the look shared between Christ and Peter in that moment using the Greek word 'emblepo'; to look with love, or to look to someone's heart. Imagine how tender and piercing that gaze must have been—the gaze of a savior who understands the full extent of his beloved apostle's weakness and brokenness.

Perhaps take a moment and imagine Christ turning that same gaze on you, a look that communicates both deep sorrow and boundless mercy in the face of your sins and shortcomings.

These are two stories of despair. For Judas, it was self-hatred. What form of despair do you think Peter was experiencing?

Let's pause for a moment. How do you think Peter responds?

A note about the Jewish rite of Shiva

Shiva is a Jewish rite of mourning following the death of a family member or loved one. It traditionally begins following the burial of the deceased and lasts for seven days. Of course, Jesus was buried just before the start of the Sabbath, and shiva gatherings do not take place on that holy day.

The TV show, "The Chosen" (season 4) depicted two instances of shiva. In the second episode, Jesus gathered the disciples to travel to conduct shiva for John the Baptist following his beheading. Later in episode seven, Jesus and the disciples travel to Bethany following Lazarus's death to join Martha and Mary to "sit shiva" for him. We know what happens there, but a profound line of dialogue in the scene just following Lazarus walking away is (a newly renamed) Peter stating to the mourners standing outside the now empty tomb, "The Shiva is over."

Since Jesus was entombed just before the sabbath, His shiva would not start until after the sabbath is over at sunset on Saturday. Let us think about what is about to happen.

What does "Mom" do?

From the cross, Jesus tells his mother, "Woman, behold your son." We know that He was not just referring to John but to all of us as being her children. We know of the anguish that she feels upon the violent death of her Son, perhaps recalling Simeon's prophesy, "And yourself, a sword shall pierce." We can imagine that Mary is not the type to dwell very long because she alone knows Jesus's mission is not over and that she has 10 "new sons" that she needs to prepare for the weeks ahead, and this means that they need to gather "the boys" for their upcoming mission for which they know nothing about.

Let us engage in some imaginative role play. Imagine Mary asking John where Peter may be "hiding out" and for John to accompany her to find him. Once they do, what does she say? (Remember, it is the sabbath.)

Gathering in the Upper Room

Peter gathers the Apostles in the Upper Room to join Mary, Mary Magdeline and the other women who accompanied Mary and John at the cross. Imagine Mary asking the Apostles to reflect upon the things that Jesus taught them during their time together to get them to think of “what’s next.”

Let’s use the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary as our reference.

The Baptism in the Jordan

Matthew 3 v. 13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?” Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son,* with whom I am well pleased.”

John 1 v29 – 34

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me. I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.’” John testified further, saying, “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit.’ Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

Only John’s narrative cites specific witnesses to Jesus’s baptism. Two of John’s disciples are referenced, Andrew and an unnamed one, which usually means John himself as he never self-references by name.

Imagine the apostles having a flashback on Jesus’s baptism and how John the Baptist’s testimony of, “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain on him,” and “Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

- How do you think that Andrew and (young) John responded to their brothers when asked about John’s (the Baptist) testimony?

- What do you was going through the young disciples' minds when they heard Jesus referred to as the Son of God?

The Wedding at Cana

John 2 v. 1-12

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

After this, he and his mother, [his] brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there only a few days.

The new apostles witnessed Jesus's interaction with his mother.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come."

- How do you think they reacted among themselves?
- Do you think they may have asked Mary about what may have been going through Jesus's mind before he performed his first outward sign?

The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God

Mark 1 v. 14-15

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

How do you think the Apostles talked about the Kingdom of God.

- In The Chosen, Jesus spoke to Mary on his disappointment that his disciples “weren’t getting it.” (My words, not Jonathan Roumie’s.). What sort of discussions did they have for this question, “What, exactly, is the Kingdom of God?”

The Transfiguration

- We discussed the Transfiguration at length at our first April Gathering.
 - From the perspective of Peter, James and John, what was really happening?

Mark’s Gospel verse ended, “As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So, they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.”

- Do you think that Peter, James and John brought up the Transfiguration at this gathering, even though Jesus explicitly not to mention it until after the resurrection?

The Institution of the Eucharist

Matthew 26 v 26-30

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, I for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father.” Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

We know of the Last Supper and its significance through our years of Catholic training. What do you think was going through the Apostles’ mind?

Other questions to discuss

When we attend wakes, we often ask family members of their memories of the deceased.

- What sorts of discussions would the Apostles have with Mary?
- What do you think Mary told them?
- How do you think Mary helped prepare the men for the event that they did not yet understand, despite all of Jesus’s “hints” before His death?

Final Observations/ Thoughts

Closing Prayer

Prayer for Easter Vigil by Pope Benedict XVI

“Lord, show us that love is stronger than hatred, that love is stronger than death. Descend into the darkness and the abyss of our modern age, and take by the hand those who await you. Bring them to the light! In my own dark nights, be with me to bring me forth! Help me, help all of us, to descend with you into the darkness of all those people who are still waiting for you, who out of the depths cry unto you! Help us to bring them your light! Help us to say the “yes” of love, the love that makes us descend with you and, in so doing, also to rise with you.

Amen!”

Prayer for Hallow 2025 Pray 40

“I do believe, help my unbelief!” Mark 9 v24