

Joseph of Arimathea...went to see Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He then took it down, wrapped it in a shroud and put him in a tomb which was hewn in stone in which no one had yet been laid... Meanwhile the women who had come from Galilee with Jesus were following behind...Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. And on the Sabbath day, they rested, as the Law required....

Luke 23: 52-56

My feelings of numbness and emptiness can only be a shadow of Mary's. She has done all she could for her son; she remained with him to the very end and now, ever faithful to the Law, she rested.

In this period of waiting for Jesus' resurrection, I recall my journey with Mary during this week. I spend time reliving her hopes and dreams, her sorrowful moments, her anxieties, all that might have been but never will be.

I pray for all those whose lives feel empty following a loss. It might be the loss of a loved one but also the loss of a much needed job through redundancy or the loss of good health due to a serious disease.

I entrust all those who are living in the darkness and emptiness of a Holy Saturday to the care of Mary .

I also ask Jesus, her son, that, in time, they should see in their lives the bright light and the joy of Easter Sunday.

Your journey has blessed ours, Mary.

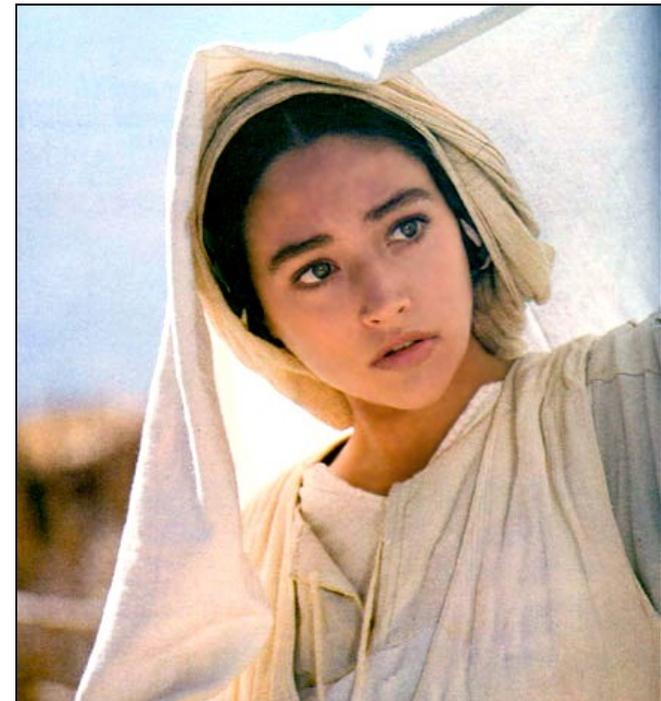
Your YES dares us to believe in the impossible,
to embrace the unknown,
and to expect the breaking through of mystery
onto our bleak and level horizons.

We will forever remember. **We will not be afraid,**
for the life that you birthed will not be extinguished in our souls.

E. Gateley



HOLY WEEK MEDITATIONS WITH MARY



*Olivia Hussey as Mary the mother of Jesus in the film
Jesus of Nazareth (1977)*

During Holy Week, you may like to spend time with Jesus' mother Mary during her moments of sorrow. Each day there is a prayerful reflection and an extract from Edwina Gateley's poetry taken from "Soul Sisters", (2002 Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New-York.)

Take what is helpful to your prayer from these sources and be with Mary as she protects her baby boy, watches him growing up and leaving home. She sees him often surrounded by enemies, and finally making his way to Calvary.

Try to enter into her life, her hopes, her pain and disappointments, until that fateful day when she stands at the foot of her son's cross.

In her, see all mothers and fathers and any one who has suffered bereavement.

Each day, go to a place which you find comfortable and come to some inner quiet using the way you know works best for you. Perhaps relaxing your body, repeating a mantra, becoming aware of your breathing etc.

Focus on the way you feel and on what your needs are at this time. Ask the Lord to be with you as you pray. Read the passage from the gospel, perhaps several times, stopping when a phrase particularly speaks to you.

With the help of the reflection, try to enter into the scene, let the Spirit guide your prayer.

When you are ready to conclude your prayer, bring it slowly to a close by thanking the Lord for being with you.

You may want to close your prayer time saying a Hail Mary.

They took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the Skull or, as it was called in Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified him with two others...

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, "Woman, this is your son". Then to the disciple he said, "This is your mother". And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home. John 19: 17, 25-27



I try to find within myself a space where all is quiet. I enter the sorrowful scene. I feel the heat of the day, the dust, the noise. Perhaps I am drawn to be with Mary in her grief or to look at her Son on the cross. I listen to Jesus speaking to his mother. I look at the expression on their faces.

Moved by Mary's faithfulness and compassion for her son, I stay with them and contemplate this very special moment.

When I am ready, I bring to mind the members of my family whom the Lord has called to himself. I recall my sense of loss.

I consider how a family's structure changes when someone dies. I may feel I want to look further afield at all people who suffer unjustly, through war, ethnic cleansing, or any form of violence, all over the world.

With Mary, I ponder these things. I speak to her and to her son Jesus, telling them simply in my own words what is in my heart.

Leaving you, Mary, all emptied out -- bereft now of son, and grandchildren -- stolen away by the realm of God.

Only the Word was left for you,
Mary, Mother of the Afflicted.

And even that was wrenched from you when they killed him.

Only silence, was left for you, Mary, Mother of sorrows,
and a grief too deep to imagine,
etching in your soul deep spaces for Wisdom to make her home.

E.Gateley

He was still speaking to the crowds when his mother and his brothers appeared; they were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him. But to the man who told him, Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12: 46-50



In my imagination, I see Jesus, tirelessly teaching the crowds, always at the service of others. Never a moment's peace, more demands, more cures, more attempts to trap him. How do I feel? I listen to the messenger announcing the presence of Jesus' family. I watch his mother and brothers, waiting to speak to him. What do they want to say to him? Maybe I have encountered similar instances in my life when I have been concerned by the apparently inexplicable behaviour of a child or relative. How did I deal with the situation? I let my attention wander from one character to the other, perhaps I find myself being the messenger. How do I feel on hearing Jesus' reply? With Mary, I ponder these things. I speak to her and to her son Jesus, telling them simply in my own words what is in my heart.

...Until he began to speak aloud, your boy,
 calling for justice in the market place,
 demanding integrity and fair play... and with every speech,
 with every act of defiance, with every call to liberation,
 with every amazing deed,
 your dreams of peace and liberation,
 your dreams of a secure old age...evaporated.
 Ah, Mary, Mother of Sorrows,
 were you desperate and sick with worry?
 Jesus, your boy...All grown up now, too big for your protection, Mary.
 Too filled with his message to hear your pleadings...
 And so you watched and waited, wept and prayed, letting go slowly and
 reluctantly, as [parents] must of all claims and expectations.
 E. Gateley

When the day came for them to be purified...they took Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. .. As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary: " This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your heart too." Luke 2: 22, 33-



I try to imagine the scene using all my senses, the architecture of the room, the smells, the feel of the garments, the voice of Simeon. I look at all the characters in turn, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, the young Jesus. Who do I feel particularly drawn to? With them, I wonder at the things being said. I recall some of the events that lead to this day; it began with the visit of an angel, and then the time spent with Elizabeth, the journey to Bethlehem, the birth in the stable. It has not been easy for Mary and now Simeon speaks of more difficulties ahead. With Mary, I ponder these things. I speak to her and to her son Jesus, telling them simply in my own words what is in my heart.

*What did you know, Mary, except girlish vulnerability
 and a gut awareness of your life whirling out of control?
 ...The hard mud floor of a darkened stable...That's where the miracle
 happened, Mary, That's where your woman body, defying filth,
 cold and poverty brought forth a new warm life,
 The Son of God.
 So must we, remembering your story Mary, seek that life, eternally capable
 of rising from mud and sticky mess.
 So must we, though anxious and uncertain, breathe the words passed on
 through the ages: **Do not be afraid,**
 though we cannot see nor dare imagine
 what awful things evil would wreak on our fragile world.
 E.Gateley*



After the magi had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him". So Joseph got up and taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead.
Matthew 2: 13-15

I spend some time entering into the scene. I see Joseph anxious, bewildered, telling his wife the message from the angel of the Lord.

I turn my attention to Mary, I imagine her response, her words, the tone of her voice, what it will mean for them as a family. What do I see?

I may be drawn to Joseph or Mary. I remain with the scene and let the Spirit guide my thoughts and feelings.

When the time seems right, I turn my attention to all the families who have to leave their homes because of war or violent regimes. Perhaps I know refugee families in my neighbourhood, my parish.

With Mary, I ponder these things. I speak to her and to her son Jesus, telling them simply in my own words what is in my heart.

And so you carried life for the world, Mary,
as you fled, to protect that very life from threats of death.
Joining the world's mass of displaced people,
you became a refugee, alien, immigrant, homeless,
and settled in a foreign land—
the only place to safely nurture your fragile dream.
Like so many other women who flee violence, clutching their babies,
you crossed the border defining you a stranger,
dependent on foreign aid, welfare and hand outs—
the charity of others—
To feed the Son of God.

E. Gateley

Every year Jesus and his parents used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was 12 years old, they went up for the feast as usual....The boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it....after a day's journey, they went to look for him among their relations and their acquaintances. When they failed to find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.



Three days later they found him in the Temple...They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, "My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you."

Luke 2: 41-50

"Have you seen him? Isn't he with you? When did you last see him? I thought maybe he'd travelled with you? Where can he be?" I imagine the anxiety, the fear, the search for the boy Jesus by his distraught parents.

Maybe I experienced a similar situation with my own children or with children I know and love. How did I cope?

I pray that parents who have to endure the pain of living apart from their children, whatever the circumstances, can find some comfort in the support and compassion of their friends and family.

With Mary, I ponder these things. I speak to her and to her son Jesus, telling them simply in my own words what is in my heart.

Did you long, Mary, as we all do, for a peaceful, normal life—
a nice domestic routine with regular meals— and grandchildren?
Slowly, then it seemed so rapidly, you watched your child grow—
wondering how he would be and what he would become.
Fondly dreaming of the security of his love and care
wrapping your old age... and the grandchildren.
You dreamed like all [parents] do.

E. Gateley