

## Midweek Reflections – Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April

### Mary Magdalene – by Kate Day

I wonder who you are, Mary; the one they call “Magdalene”? I wonder what has brought you to this place today? I wonder what will happen to you now?

I wonder: what is your story?

I wonder what led them to say that you were afflicted with seven demons? Were you wild? Wilful? A “troubled” woman?

Were you sick? Traumatized?

Unlovable?

Unloved?

See, there are seven demons already.

And how did you first meet him? Jesus, I mean. Did he come to your village, and did your father, or maybe your despairing husband, engineer a meeting, to see if the miracle worker could work a miracle on such a hopeless case? Render you quiet and obedient. Respectable. Normal.

I wonder. I suspect if he did, you ran away and refused to meet this itinerant quack. What could he possibly know about the shattered hopes and unfulfillable dreams which tore at your soul?

I think he came looking for you though. Jesus, I mean. I think he found you and spoke your name, “Mary”, and you realised that Someone. Finally. Knew you. And valued you – loved you – just as

you were. That it was OK to be you. That the demons were finally bound and banished, and that another world was possible.

I wonder how long it took for you to put your local affairs in order, to sort out the finances, to join the women who “followed him and provided for him”? How could you do anything else? Other than “follow him”, I mean. It was as if Life itself resided in this one man.

I wonder how you were changed? Walking with him? Listening to him? Serving him? Being part of the great adventure?

When did you start to realise that the clouds were gathering? When he turned his face towards Jerusalem, did you sense a drop in the temperature? When the road took you past Roman crosses with the tattered remains of would-be revolutionaries left hanging upon them as a threat and a warning, did you have an inkling of what was to come.

I wonder, did the words “take up your cross and follow me” begin to take on a new meaning? I wonder if you ever thought of turning back?

Maybe you did. Maybe that was where your personal battle was fought. Way before Judas and Peter had to make their choices, had you already made yours? Already resolved that come what may, you would stay. That if you could do nothing else, that you would provide for him in death as you had in life? You would anoint his body, and lay him to rest?

That the love that had overflowed from him to give you new life, would overflow back to him in his death?

I wonder.

You see, I have wondered how you found the strength to wait at the foot of the cross. To see the agony. To feel so helpless. And yet to stay.

I have wondered how you kept going, when John had taken Jesus' mother home, and the rest of you were left abandoned on the rubbish tip. How you found the strength to go to the garden to see where Jesus' body was buried?

How you found the spices to anoint him? In Jerusalem? On the Sabbath? Were they already there, in your meagre luggage? How long had you been preparing to say goodbye?

No wonder grief was piled upon grief when you could not even find the body. When all you could say is "I do not know where they have laid him." When it seemed that all the demons had returned at once. When it seemed that hope was finally, irretrievably, shattered.

And then a single word. "Mary". Death defeated.

I wonder if you had dared to dream that Jesus' words about rising again might actually be true? If that was the real reason you went to the garden. Just to see.

It would be wonderful to think that you did, but it's pretty clear that whatever you had thought about those words, finding the living Jesus in the garden wasn't what you were expecting.

But then, Jesus always turns up in unexpected places.

In places where we feel our world is falling apart....

In places where we think we just cannot carry on....

In places where the voices of others, or within our own heads, have whispered that God isn't interested in people like us...

On hillsides or at the bus stop...

At weddings and wakes...

In the middle of the night, or suddenly in a crowded room...

In a word

In an image

He is there, speaking our name, bringing hope, launching new life,  
welcoming us home.

Shh. Listen. He is speaking your name. Now.

A prayer:

Awaken me, Lord  
To your light,  
Open my eyes  
To your presence.

Awaken me, Lord  
To your love,  
Open my heart  
To your indwelling.

Awaken me, Lord  
To your life,  
Open my mind  
To your abiding.

Awaken me, Lord  
To your purpose,  
Open my will  
To your guiding.

Amen.

