

The Women of the Cross

The Witnesses Called Mary

By Josephine Kelly

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DEDICATION

To Hannah, my favorite, and Lynne and Lou who had faith and Jeannie and Molly who went on the journey. Thank you to the trio!

STORY OF THE PLAY

This drama gives life to the last seven lines uttered by Christ and the women who must witness his death.

It's a beautiful and mournful play capturing the story of Jesus' crucifixion and the witnesses of Mary, his mother; Mary Magdalene, his disciple and Mary Clopas, sister to Mary, Mother of Jesus. As Jesus utters his final words from the cross it is the women of his ministry who ensure his story is told.

The three women travel with Jesus to the hills of Golgotha and bear witness to His crucifixion. These women go to the cross when his other disciples must fear discovery. These are the women who bear witness to the brutality of the day and stay by His side until...

Running time is 40 - 45 minutes and has original music and sound effect cues that can be purchased from Eldridge Publishing and used for greater emotional impact to the performance.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

It was performed in 2023 as part of the Holy Week celebration in Pueblo and La Junta, Colorado.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 w)

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

MARY OF MAGDALENE

MARY OF CLOPAS

VOICE OF JESUS: This is offstage and can be recorded.

COSTUMES

The women are dressed in the traditional garments of the time and require no costume change.

SET

A cross with a glowing light on it can represent the Christ. It can be bright at the beginning and slowly fade as the story progresses.

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1. SFX: The Unknown Darkness Was Shattered

(AT RISE: All three WOMEN stand at the foot of the cross or they can enter from back of house as though following the cross through the streets. A cross with a glowing light on it can represent the Christ. It can be bright at the beginning and slowly fade as the story progresses. These women are in agony, and the pain and trauma of what they are experiencing should not be lost.)

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS: *(Most visibly distraught. SHE could be kneeling.)* My son! Oh, my son. *(Sobs with a gradual volume reduction.)*

MARY MAGDALENE: *(Turns to the audience.)* The demons inside bruised me. Never were they quiet. It was the abuse put there by the life that unfolded before me and played over and over in my mind. Each demon created a whirlwind of self-hatred -- unworthiness that blocked the light of love that could not pierce this abusive darkness. Not until he came. Not until Jesus picked my soul up and out of the darkness of shame that feeds demons and traps us into a living darkness.

His touch was like fire. A fire I feared and coveted. A fire that melted the darkness of abusive demons with the warmth of love and light.

The darkness was shattered, and the cold lonesomeness fell away with the quiet words... "You are healed." And the voices in my head were silenced. They fled my soul and the peace of his love, the warmth of his voice and the depth found in his eyes brought my soul back and freed me to see, to feel, to be the light.

I am Mary Magdalene and I stand here at his feet during the darkest time of his life, and I can offer only my presence.

MARY OF CLOPAS: *(Turns to the audience.)* My life has had His light in it for as long as I can remember. A small boy that would run and play.

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MARY OF CLOPAS: *(Cont'd.)* As a child, he would make birds out of clay. Mold and form them until they were a work of art. Many times, 12 little birds he would create... 12 birds. My rabbi, my teacher, my messiah, my sister's child – that is who Jesus was... is to me. I am Mary of Clopas, and I served him. Johnna whose husband, Chuza, is of Harold's household, heard what they had done to John the Baptist and told Luke...

This world is brutal;

2. SFX: This Brutal World

MARY OF CLOPAS: *(Cont'd.)* men are brutal. They said Jesus took to a boat and sought solitude when they told him of John's death. This has touched so many in my family. I knew I had to serve this man if just by being here with my sister. Did he see the tragedy of our innocent John dying at the hands of this tyrannical beast as a whisper of this day?

The leaders of this time are blind – for they cannot see.

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS: For with God, nothing is impossible...

(MARY OF CLOPAS comes to help MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS up from kneeling.)

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS: *(Cont'd. She faces the audience.)* For with God, nothing is impossible...

3. SFX: Be Not Afraid - Jesus on the Cross

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS: *(Cont'd.)* I felt the angel before I saw him. My soul came alive and when I turned the most beautiful sight arched before me. "Be not afraid. For you have found favor with God." I was a girl unknown to man and my Joseph, a good and righteous man, did not turn away from me. I have been so blessed, so how is it that we find ourselves here? Blessed among women? Blessed among mothers? Be not afraid. Not afraid... *(Goes to the base of the cross.)* Is he afraid?

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MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS: *(Cont'd. Turns to MARY OF CLOPAS.)* Is he afraid? How can he not be – my son! My child – born in a manger to a girl in a world that has hunted him from the beginning. The angel saved us when Herod sought my son's life. Can there not be a miracle today? One small miracle that keeps my son in this world? I am Mary, Mother of Jesus... Be not afraid, my son, for your mother is here. Could we not go back to the times when you had skinned knees, and I dried your tears?

(SFX: Birds chirp.)

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS: *(Cont'd.)* I am here – I am a witness.

MARY OF CLOPAS: I am here – I am a witness.

MARY MAGDALENE: I am here – I am a witness.

End of Scene

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Scene 2

MARY MAGDALENE: Even now he speaks to the two on either side and teaches the love of our heavenly Father. Forgiveness. I cannot cry out although my very being wants to say, come down from this cross. Save yourself – save your mother. I am ready for a revolution. His ideas are transforming, and the leadership rejects him. He is compassion in a world that demands we live by laws and boundaries the church dictates and not for what our heart calls. I am the first among women in his gathering. They, the men who follow, do not like my place. Peter -

4. SFX: A Roster Crows - This Day in Paradise

MARY MAGDALENE: (*Cont'd.*) is not here. Three times he denied knowing our Lord. Three times... We are here to witness –

VOICE OF JESUS: Today shall thou be with me in Paradise.

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS: (*Cries out.*) Noooo. (*MARY OF CLOPAS comforts HER.*) My son. How can a mother bear to see this? In this public place meant to shame him. Meant to break us. They mock him. They yell profanities and spit on him. My child. My first born. My miracle.

Oh Joseph...so good that you are not here to see the pain our son must endure. The most innocent of lambs, my little lamb, now God's lamb. You always said I would have to give him back, but I thought that was when he began his ministry.

(*Crosses to look out over hill.*) How did we get here? How did that starry night become this hot and hallow day? I would hear his cries as a child, and I could comfort him. How can a mother bear this? Son, I hear you and I am with you.

MARY MAGDALENE: He said to Martha, "Your brother, Lazarus will rise again." I wondered why would one come back from paradise except that they are summoned by Jesus? He is this paradise – the way, and he has been the truth. Every day I sat down and broke bread with this man was paradise.

End of Freeview

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